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KCC plays a risky game with 15% pay increase

REGARDLESS of whether you work in the public or private sector, it is everyone's ambition to see their pay, if not rise, then at least keep track of inflation.

After all, we don't work just for the sheer fun of it - we do it to keep a roof over our heads and provide for our nearest and dearest.

For most of us, a pay rise in many sectors today happens about as often as a Brit winning Wimbledon.

For politicians, on the other hand, the issue of remuneration is one laced with toxicity.

MPs are frequently slammed for calls to see their own salaries lifted. And, in most cases, it's not unreasonable. They work long, hard, hours in jobs which not only are high-pressured but sacrifice a little of their privacy too. They deserve a strong pay packet.

But then don't we all feel that? All feel that we work long, hard hours and deserve money that reflects the effort and expertise we deliver? Just that if we're all struggling and not seeing a rise, there's an equally strong argument to say 'you may deserve it, but we can't afford it'. That's the delights of capitalism for you. Sometimes it shines, sometimes it's cloudy.

All of which brings us to Kent County Council, where councillors opted not to lift their pay by the 1.5 per cent recommended, but by a bumper 15 per cent. Paul Carter was quick to point out they'd not had a rise in eight years and some had even take a five per cent cut. But, again, so have lots of us. That's modern life for you.

The reality is that when the council wants sympathy over its plight of declining funding - sympathy it deserves - whacking its own pay packets up by such a colossal amount simply isn't the way to do it. Perhaps time for a rethink?

Editor **Chris Britcher**

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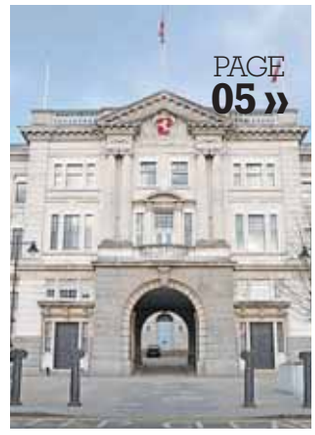

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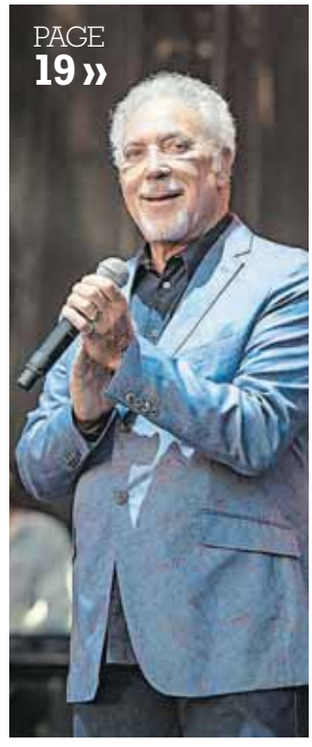

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Fury as councillors vote to increase pay by 15%

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

CONFLICT: County Hall was divided following the highly controversial decision

A VOTE to increase councillors' allowances by a staggering 15 per cent has been slammed as "preposterous" by opposition members.

In a report by Kent County Council's member remuneration panel, a rise of 1.5 per cent was proposed, which would see councillors pick up £13,000 compared to £12,805 which they are currently paid.

However, Conservative members instead called for a rise of £1,920, in a move which sparked fury across the chamber.

The argument put forward by Tory councillors was that a hike was needed to attract younger candidates, in order to bring more diversity to County Hall and challenge the perception that councillors are all "men over the age of 65".

They also insisted the role of an elected member could no longer be considered 'part-time', as it required many members to pull weeks of at least 30 hours, and that should be reflected in their allowances.

Opposition councillors, however, disputed the proposal, with Labour's Tan Dhesi describing it as "preposterous" and fellow Labour councillor, Dara Farrell, the youngest member at County Hall, saying he "cannot look my neighbours in the eye and say I voted for an increase in my pay".

Leader of the Liberal Democrat opposition, Rob Bird, said "it is wrong and it will be seen by the people of Kent as wrong", while Trudy Dean added: "This is a disgraceful move – a 15 per cent increase without a word to the electorate before they went out to vote for them."

The move was so controversial, it even caused Conservative councillor Jeremy Kite to vote against his own party, as he told colleagues: "[The public] will not understand that we are able to set our remuneration level and set it like this."

Despite Cllr Kite's rebellion, however, the Tories still won the vote comfortably, after securing a huge chamber majority following the local election in May.

Council leader Paul Carter said: "Why should we have to tolerate a freeze on the allowances that were set in 2008?

"It hasn't reflected the cost of living increases and pay increases that everybody else has had, except us."

Hospitals to get urgent care hubs to ease strain on A&E departments

CENTRES for urgent, but not emergency treatment, are set to open at two west Kent hospitals in a radical shake-up of the way healthcare is provided.

The new Urgent Treatment Centres, which will be open round-the-clock, will be created alongside the A&E departments at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells hospitals.

It will allow patients with urgent issues to be seen by GPs or nurses, while freeing up time in emergency departments for consultants and their teams.

Mental health workers, social care workers and therapists will all be part of the teams offering advice and support to patients.

Building work on the centres is due to start later this year at both hospitals thanks to £645,000 of NHS England funding and to support its development, the current out of hours GP services at Tonbridge Cottage Hospital, Sevenoaks Hospital and Cranbrook are being reviewed.

The relocation of the current out of hours bases will be in a phased approach, starting with Tonbridge Cottage Hospital by September 30 this year, followed by Cranbrook, with Sevenoaks anticipated to be re-located by April 1, 2019.

The proposals are due to be discussed at a public meeting at West Kent College, Tonbridge, on July 18 from 4pm until 7pm.

Dr Mark Whistler, urgent care lead for NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "We have known significant numbers of people come to A&E when they don't have a strict medical need to do so, because they don't know what else to do.

"Once these centres are open, patients who come to the hospital but need to see a nurse or GP, will do so.

"Then if it turns out their case is more serious than it might appear, they can be swiftly moved into A&E.

"Meanwhile, A&E teams will be able to concentrate on giving the specialist care only they can provide."

Fines for absent pupils dips but authority owed £40,000

THE number of fines issued to parents for taking their children out of Kent schools has been slashed in half on the previous year, but the county council has been unable to collect more than £40,000 of those penalties.

From September 2016 to July 2017, 1,221 parents were fined for unauthorised absences, compared to 3,504 in 2015/16 and 4,726 in 2014/15.

The drop is as a result in a change of policy to prosecute only parents whose child's attendance at school falls to 90 per cent or below, following a court case in which a parent was excused a fine for taking his daughter on holiday in term time because the child's attendance was better than 90 per cent.

Warning over 'inappropriate' 999 emergency police calls

POLICE are urging 999 callers to "think first" before calling after a flood of non-emergency calls including one asking for information about a car being sold.

Another caller from Dartford called to complain of bad driving, which had happened 10 minutes prior to the phone call.

Ch Supt Nicola Faulconbridge, head of crime and incident response at Kent Police, said: "We want people to think whether their call really does constitute a real emergency. Every inappropriate call to 999 puts the lives of people in a genuine emergency at risk."

During a seven-hour shift last month, 70 of the 158 calls to 999 were found to be inappropriate and not needing an emergency response.

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Steiner school confirms it will close this year

THE Canterbury Steiner School in Chartham is to close in December, just weeks after announcing its future was secure.

The school, which charges up to £3,138 per term, offers its own unique curriculum, claiming to consider the physical, emotional, spiritual and individual needs of each child through the learning process.

School leader Tessa Carias said: ''We are very sad we are to close. Although all attempts have been made to continue the Steiner/Waldorf education we offer, we can no longer financially sustain the school on the present site.

''We sincerely hope it becomes possible for Steiner education to continue in some future form in Kent.''

Manston Airport hopes fly after ruling on future use of buildings on site

By Tom Pyman
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PLANS to change the use of four buildings on the former Manston Airport site were this week rejected - fuelling hopes it could one day see flights returning.

Bosses at site owners Stone Hill Park (SHP), which aims to deliver 2,500 homes and leisure facilities, applied to change the use of the buildings from aviation use only.

However, inspector Matthew Nunn concluded that "the proposals would conflict with the council's current approach to the location of new development within the airport, which is consistent with national policy".

While it comes as a boost for campaigners working to re-open the airport, including RiverOak Strategic Partners, which is currently consulting with the public on its plans to submit an application for a development consent order (DCO) of the land, SHP chiefs insist the decision by the Planning Inspectorate does not affect the progress of its proposals.

UNCERTAIN: Manston Airport

A planning application has already been submitted and is expected to be heard by Thanet District Council later this year.

RSP claims its own plans for aviation could create up to 30,000 jobs but there have been concerns after bosses admitted there would be some night flights.

SHP spokesman Ray Mallon said: "We believed the case put forward was compelling and I am somewhat surprised at the decision, as approval would have brought an immediate jobs boost to the area.

"Thanet District Council withdrew its original objections and a decision in our favour would not have compromised the possibility of a DCO being brought forward by RSP.

"It is therefore a mystery to me as to why the Planning Inspectorate has reached this decision, which in my opinion is flawed and an error of judgement on the part of the inspector concerned."

An RSP spokesperson said: "We're delighted. RiverOak remains certain that Manston has a vibrant future as an airport and we intend to make sure it delivers on its full economic and employment potential for the east Kent region."

STADIUM: Fans are heading here

Trains to feel the strain of athletic events

PASSENGERS who regularly use Ebbsfleet and Ashford international stations are being warned to expect busier trains over the coming weeks with thousands set to flock to the capital for big athletics championships.

Both are on the high speed route and are likely to see a significant rise in passenger numbers during July and August with people travelling to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford for the World Para Athletics - which is already under way - and the IAAF World Championships.

Southeastern says it is running more trains during this time to get people home after the events but are warning passengers to allow extra time to travel as peak services in the morning and evening are already busy.

Rail chiefs say high speed stations may have queuing systems in place to ensure maximum safety and are reminding passengers to keep personal belongings with them at all times, keep valuables in inner pockets and ensure any bags have all zips and fasteners closed.

The World Para Athletics runs until July 23. The World Athletics Championship at the same venue runs through August 5 to 13. Around 500,000 people are expected to attend.

Chance to see plans of £32m road scheme

DETAILS of a £32 million project to widen a key road in Ashford will be on show this week.

Kent County Council announced earlier this year it was to widen the A28 Chart Road between the Tank and Matalan roundabouts in preparation for the Chilmington Green development which will see around 5,750 homes being built over the next 25 years.

People will be able to get an update on the scheme at Singleton Environment Centre on July 19 and at Godinton Village Hall on July 20.

Visitors on July 19 will also be able to take part in the Chilmington Green draft community development strategy consultation being held by Ashford Borough Council and its partners.

Subject to the acquisition of the remaining parcels of land required for the scheme, construction work is expected to start in early 2018 and take about 18 months to complete. If KCC has to use its compulsory purchase powers, then the start of the scheme may be delayed until 2019.

Rollercoaster out of action for a week

THE Scenic Railway at Dreamland will be out of action to visitors, just as the summer holidays kick off later this month.

Work on the UK's oldest wooden rollercoaster will take place from July 24 to 28 to replace a section of the rope on one of the ride's lift hills.

Though it is scheduled maintenance, it comes at a crucial time for the recently-revamped leisure complex in Margate. It will also remind park-goers how the ride - the park's showpiece - was out of action for five months last year.

However, bosses are putting a brave face on it, claiming the work will provide added interest for visitors to the park, who will be able to watch professional craftsmen executing a traditional process.

During this period, Dreamland is offering anyone who buys an unlimited ride wristband - either in advance or on the day - one of the park's newly launched Dream Passes preloaded to the value of £5 for use on food and drink.

Watchdog probe into Masood concludes

AN investigation into the shooting of Kent-born terrorist, Khalid Masood, by the police watchdog has ended.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) said it had completed its probe into the shooting outside the Houses of Parliament on March 22 and has passed its report to the coroner and the Met Police.

Masood, who was born in Dartford and went to school in Tunbridge Wells was killed by police after he drove his car through pedestrians on Westminster Bridge and then stabbed former Bromley PC Keith Palmer in an attack which killed five people.

IPCC deputy chair, Sarah Green, said: ''Our investigation has now concluded and our report into the shooting has been provided to both HM Coroner and the Met. The position has remained throughout the investigation that no police officers were ever under investigation. The IPCC and the Met Police followed agreed working arrangements related to terrorism incidents which worked well.''

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Centre calls on parking firm to review Fremlin price hikes

By Chris Murphy
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SHOPPING centre Fremlin Walk says it is "in discussions" with its car park operator after shoppers were left fuming following a sudden major price hike.

The multi-storey car park, connected to the Maidstone town centre complex, introduced the increase this week.

Now on Friday and Saturday, a half hour stay will cost £3.50. It used to be £3 for two hours. Those two hours will now cost £5.

Stay over four, and it is £10, but visit for 30 minutes on Sunday and Monday and it will cost £1. Stay for three hours on Friday or Saturday, and the price is £8, whereas before it was £5 for four hours.

The charges also appear complex with three time zones across a week, all with varying fees, although none allow for parking over eight hours.

One angry shopper told KoS it was the "final nail in the coffin" for the town centre.

A spokesman for the shopping complex said: "We are currently in discussions with our car park operator, Indigo, with regards to the recent pricing changes at the shopping centre. We are determined to deliver a high quality service for our local community at a competitive rate, and therefore we will be seeking a resolution to ensure our centre remains accessible and affordable for all."

SHOPS: Pressure is growing for car parking charges to be reduced

Indigo Park Services, based in Watford, took over the car park in 2010.

The company is blaming what it calls "unsustainable" increases in its own costs, including rent and business rates at the 760-space site.

The parking company, said: "We would like to reassure customers that we have made every effort to keep these increases as modest as possible, and we thank them for their understanding. We will continue to run the car park safely and securely to the high standards that customers expect."

Maidstone Borough Council said: "We were informed of the increase to car parking charges by Indigo who manage the car park on behalf of Fremlin Walk. This is a commercial decision that has been taken by their management company.

"The council offers a full range of car parking options including short and long stay options to suit all budgets."

Rogue trader alert as three are arrested

MAIDSTONE residents are being warned to be on their guard against rogue traders and bogus callers after men tried to con a man in his 90s out of a large amount of money by claiming to repair his driveway.

The incident occured on July 6 in the Mote Avenue area and saw men demand cash in advance of work. Three people have been arrested on suspicion of fraud.

Offices boost as part of £72m regeneration

PLANS to develop more than 20,000 square feet of office space have been unveiled as part of a £72m redevelopment of Tunbridge Wells town centre.

The proposals, which are currently being considered as part of wider plans to revamp the civic centre, theatre and car park, include new council offices.

Alt-J show switched

A SHOW by the band alt-J at Margate's Dreamland has been switched to the Winter Gardens.

The show by the indie three-piece had been due to play at the Hall By The Sea venue on September 5.

A spokesperson told us: "Dreamland along with the promoter have taken the decision to move the event due to the high demand and because of the capacity constraints of the venue."

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Fundraising in memory of tragic Molly hits £10,000

FRIENDS and family of the student who was brutally murdered in a Chatham shopping centre car park last month, have now raised more than £10,000.

Molly McLaren, 23, from Cobham, near Gravesend, was killed on June 29 near the Dockside Outlet Centre after sustaining injuries consistent with a stabbing.

An exercise, sport and health education student at the University of Kent, she also worked at The Leather Bottle pub in her home village, where staff described her as "a beautiful soul".

Joshua Stimpson, 25 and of High Street in Wouldham, Rochester, was arrested at the scene on suspicion of murder and charged the following day.

He was remanded in custody last week after appearing via video-link from Elmley Prison, Sheppey, at Maidstone Crown Court, and will next appear in court on September 18 to enter a plea. A trial start date has been set for January 22.

Friends said: "We want to create a legacy in her honour by channelling her passion and drive to create the most positive outcome possible through the creation of The Molly McLaren Foundation."

Hearing into lorry park plans set for December

A COURT hearing on controversial plans for a lorry park "the size of Disneyland" to ease problems caused by Operation Stack is due in December, KoS can reveal.

Former chancellor George Osborne first announced in 2015 a £250m pledge to build a huge holding area for trucks after the county was blighted by gridlock two years ago.

It earmarked the village of Stanford, near Folkestone, just off the M20 as the ideal location for the park, but campaigners have vehemently opposed the move and launched a judicial review against the decision.

A date for the review was originally set for June 27, however Theresa May's decision to call a snap general election saw progress stall, with the government concerned the new administration would need time to take stock of the issue.

Roads chiefs said the hearing would not be held before October but the government has now revealed it is due for December, which will be some 17 months after the Department for Transport announced its intention to develop the facility on the Stanford West site.

While Stack hasn't been in operation since the lorry park was first proposed, the uncertainty over trade agreements post-Brexit has sparked concern that there could be delays on a regular basis at Kent's ports and KCC's transport chief, Matthew Balfour, recently called on the government to "push on at pace".

Gardener wins silver

THE head of Canterbury Cathedral's gardening team won a silver award at last week's RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show.

Philip Oostenbrink, created a Japanese garden and walked away with another silver to match the one he won in 2016.

Hospital trust's AGM

THE Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust will review its performance when it holds its AGM on September 7.

Open to the public, it will reflect on the last year and field questions from members of the public. It takes place at the Academic Centre in Maidstone Hospital at 2pm.

Water pressure drops

HOUSEHOLDERS in West Malling may notice a drop in water pressure and some discolouration as water mains are cleaned from Monday.

The temporary changes may occur while 'flushing' of the main pipes are carried out. To clear the water leave the tap running.

TV break for radio star

BBC Radio Kent presenter Steve N Allen is to appear on new BBC satirical TV show The Mash Report which starts on July 20.

The comedian, from Gravesend, will be on the show which airs on Thursday at 10pm and is penned by the team behind satrical website the Daily Mash.

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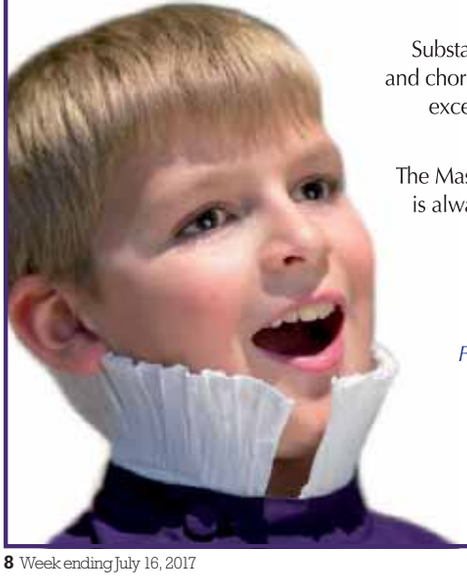

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Plans for Springfield site

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

PLANS to transform a former library site in Maidstone into a mixed-use development including dozens of homes have been revealed.

A public consultation event next Thursday will see proposals unveiled for 162 apartments, associated parking, dedicated green space and 500 square metres of community facility space - provisionally earmarked for use as a new doctor's surgery and nursery.

The plans are for the Sandling Lane plot - formerly home to the KCC Springfield Library HQ site.

The proposed development, given the working name of Tennyson Gardens, would be built on land that currently comprises a series of single and two storey buildings as well as a 13-storey tower block that is unsafe for occupation.

Demolition works were initially due to commence in early 2017 however this has now been delayed following the identification of a large amount of asbestos on the external facades of the buildings.

The asbestos is currently undisturbed and does not present a risk in its current state.

PROPOSALS: Site plan

The site originally gained planning consent from Maidstone Borough Council to build 100 apartments and 14 houses with 47 associated parking spaces in 2009 and this was later renewed in 2014.

Following liaison with council planners, Peker Holding is now seeking to modify its plans – a move that will significantly increase the number of car parking spaces and community facilities being created and retain and redevelop more green space.

Niyazi Albay, CEO of Peker Holding, said: "We are excited to share our initial plans with members of the public.

"I would like to stress that nothing has been set in stone at this stage and that the feedback and input we receive at the public consultation event will be used to refine our proposals ahead of any submission for planning permission."

The event will take place at St Faith's Hall in Ringlestone on July 20 and members of the development team will be on hand from 3pm to 7pm to discuss the initial plans and answer questions.

Brexit talks at Chevening

CRUNCH Brexit talks between the government and business leaders at a Kent mansion last weekend have been hailed as "positive".

Cabinet members including David Davis and Greg Clark descended on Chevening House last Friday to meet with dozens of business chiefs to hammer out a strategy for leaving the EU.

The luxurious 115-room estate in leafy Sevenoaks, traditionally home to the foreign secretary, has often been used by senior government figures to wine and dine esteemed guests.

Rex recovered in Newcastle

AN EAGLE which went missing from a wildlife centre in Eynsford was found some 300 miles away in Newcastle earlier this week.

Rex strayed away from Eagles Heights Wildlife Foundation during a flying display on July 7 and staff struggled to track him after his GPS experienced interference, but within two days he managed to make his way to Newcastle, where he was discovered by another animal centre.

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PLANS: Medway is in need of homes to reduce its waiting lists and this plan has won cross-party support.

As budgets are cut and houses in short supply, is this the answer?

Medway Council is to create its own property company in order to allow it control over development sites across the towns to both stimulate building of much-need homes and generate vital revenues

PLANS for Medway Council to try and alleviate its growing housing crisis by setting up its own property development company were rubber-stamped this week, ***writes Tom Pyman***.

A report presented to the unitary authority's cabinet sets out proposals for the creation of a business to maximise the opportunities to invest in, or develop, property both within and outside of Medway.

Chiefs hope it will enable the development of a number of council-owned sites as it looks to bring down huge numbers on its waiting list for housing.

Earlier this year, we revealed there were a staggering 21,980 people on the council's list in January, with 1,354 of those joining more than a decade ago.

When challenged, housing bosses at the town hall pointed out the register includes people who have lived in Medway for two years, earn less than £50,000 and own assets worth less than £50,000.

On what the council describes as the "active housing register", which includes those eligible to bid for homes, there were 5,829 applicants at the start of 2017 – 404 of which were classed as "exceptional priority", meaning their bids would be assessed before others on the register.

Regardless, it was slammed as proof of mass under delivery of homes in the area over a number of decades.

And the pressure is building further on Medway, with the council recently consulting on its local plan - a framework used to shape development in the area until 2035 - in which regeneration chiefs intend to grow Medway's population from 276,492 to 330,200 over the next two decades.

That would would require another 30,000 new homes - 25 per cent of which would be affordable housing, bosses say.

Creation of a housing company could help speed up that development, particularly as the council sees a number of obstacles currently in its way.

There is currently planning permission for 7,500 units across the borough on sites owned by third parties that are not being brought forward, according to the report.

Reasons for this non-delivery vary, but where the reason for non-delivery is due to the commercial interests of the land owner or developer, the council has a very limited ability to encourage activity on the part of third parties.

The idea is growing in popularity in council chambers up and down the country, with town halls having to come up with innovative ways to stay ahead of the curve.

The housing company could also provide an income for the council, which would be a real boost in an environment where funding from central government is being ruthlessly slashed.

Medway's Conservative leader Alan Jarrett told us he anticipates progress on the project to begin to accelerate as early as October.

"It's something we've been researching for a while, and we've looked at other local authorities such as Wokingham in Berkshire, and the London Borough of Harrow, who have very successful models," he said.

"By October we will be thinking about which sites, if any, go into it - this is very much a step in the right direction.

"We have got the potential to cut down the slice any developer might take from 20-30 per cent down to a single figure."

The proposal appears to have cross-party backing, as leader of the opposition Labour group, Vince Maple, told us he was equally enthusiastic about the plans.

He said: "The council has got to play a proactive role in getting the housing crisis dealt with.

"We have seen too often too many contractors – sometimes multi-national companies – getting planning permission and doing nothing with it.

"There are 20,000 on the waiting list and that figure is not going down, so I broadly welcome the council doing this piece of work and we'll see how quickly it delivers – I want to see spades in the ground as quickly as possible.

"There are a number of sites highlighted for regeneration, if they are the first, that would be great.

"While I don't begrudge a developer making a profit, we have seen an increase in them trying to plead poverty.

BUILDING: Council hopes to take more control of developments

"For example, the developer at Battersea Power Station says it can't afford to build an extra 250 social homes, but it turns out they're set to make a profit of £1.8 billion - that is unacceptable in my mind.

"We've not seen quite that level here in Medway but I have very little time for developers who act like that – if you can't afford it, don't come forward."

The possibility of creating new revenue streams for the council is particularly key with hostility between the two parties high following a number of controversial recent decisions.

Earlier this year, Tory chiefs proposed the closure of 19 children's centres, in a move which even drew the attention of Labour frontbencher, Angela Raynor, who described it as "an absolute scandal".

In protest, opposition members boycotted council-run events to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the Battle of Medway.

Cllr Maple added: "I would hope this generates an income but it depends on the business model.

"As a concept we are supportive and have been for some time – this is not a new idea to us, but the numbers have got to work.

"We are moving into a situation where, rightly or wrongly, the government grant is being pulled back, and in principle we will receive things like business rates, but if you can generate your own income then obviously that's a positive."

The report does highlight a number of risks in the proposal, however, including the possibility of a housing market crash, and tenants exercising their right to buy properties in which they are living, at a significant discount.

The council insists its business case outlines actions to avoid or mitigate those risks.

Cllr Jarrett said: "We will just have to see how that goes, but a housing company gives us more flexibility and the chance to maximise your land values.

"Local government has moved on rapidly in response to the financial climate we're in as well as the housing targets we've had imposed on us.

"It sharpens your thinking and the sector is learning."

Sunshine and crowds make show a great hit

More than 80,000 people flocked to Detling last weekend with organisers delighted with how the event proved

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

MORE than 80,000 people were bathed in three days of sun for this year's Kent County Show - with organisers admitting their main concern was keeping the livestock cool in the glorious hot weather.

Those behind the annual three-day event at the Kent Showground in Detling, said they were delighted with the turnout to an event where they said the only blackspot was a first day accident on the M20 which caused some major traffic snarl ups - as we reported last weekend.

The show manager Lucy Hegarty, admitted: "We knew that Friday was going to be a challenge for people to get to us when we heard that the motorway had been closed due to a serious accident."

In spite of a lower turnout on Friday, by the end of the weekend the crowds were far higher than expected.

Keeping an eye on social media comments, the organisers are also happy with the tone of messages from the public.

The Kent Agricultural Society coordinates the event and said it was keen to ensure that animal safety and welfare was key during three very warm days. The Grand Parade of Livestock was cancelled on the first day and the vets on site worked hard to ensure that animals were kept cool. The slighter cooler temperature on Saturday and Sunday morning was more comfortable for all the livestock on site, they said.

Show chairman Kevin Attwood said "We are thrilled with this year's show, the showground looked wonderful, visitors were happy and glorious sunshine helped to swell visitor numbers.

"The trade stands this year were exceptional with many of them offering wonderful activities especially for younger visitors. This gave the show a real family feel and everywhere you looked you could see how much fun people were having.

"In particular we are grateful to the agricultural machinery stands that brought their equipment up to the show this year. The displays in the area were exceedingly well received by visitors who were fascinated by the technology and innovation that modern farmers use."

AGRICULTURE: Organisers were particularly impressed with the public reaction to the display of farm machinery both past and present which fascinated visitors and drew attention to the county's rural traditions

One of the event's highlights was the Shetland Pony Grand National which captivated the crowds in the main ring.

With full grandstands on all three days to see the young riders aged between eight and 13, there was some serious competition and part of a qualifier for the ultimate Shetland Pony Grand National at the Olympia Horse Show later in the year.

The Grand Prix Showjumping which moved to Saturday was a thrilling competition with Robert Whitaker taking the first prize of £3,000.

Two new classes were added to the show jumping which almost doubled the number of entries this year to 296.

Organisers said this year livestock entries saw an significant increase over previous years.

That meant more competitions with a larger number of animals taking part, particularly in the sheep area with the highest number of entries since 2007.

Cattle entries were the highest since 2012 with Folkestone based, J Warnock winning Supreme Dairy Champion and Barwood and Padfield from Norfolk winning Supreme Beef Champion.

Ms Hegarty added: "The increased livestock entries, fantastic show weather, wonderful displays and demonstrations gave this year's show a really vibrant atmosphere and we were also delighted to report, in spite of visitor numbers, no problems with the traffic flow and car parking.

"The new food hall had a few teething problems which will be looked at for next year with the help of exhibitor feedback.

"Whenever there is a large change to the layout it takes a few years for everyone to get used to the revisions. The footfall for our trade exhibitors is something we take very seriously."

Next year, the show will be run from July 6-8.

LIVESTOCK: The heat caused some shows and parades to be delayed

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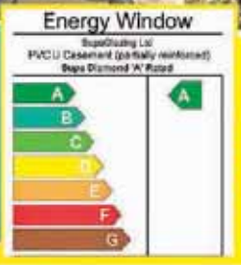

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Victims' relief as PM finally orders inquiry into scandal

Thousands were infected, thousands have since died. Now those whose lives were forever altered as a result of the blood contamination scandal will finally get answers to key questions after the prime minister agreed to hold a public inquiry

By Chris Britcher

chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

A VICTIM of the blood contamination scandal says prime minister Theresa May's decision to hold an inquiry into the situation has been "overwhelmingly won after MP after MP stood and revealed the most appalling circumstances of their constituents affected".

Steve Dymond, 61, of Broadstairs, was infected with hepatitis C after he received contaminated blood as part of treatment of his haemophilia - an inherited condition which prevents the blood from clotting properly.

He has spent years campaigning for justice for those who suffered as a result of the scandal.

On Tuesday, the PM revealed, under increasing pressure, an inquiry would be held.

Speaking to Kent on Sunday, which has campaigned for more than two years for an inquiry - Mr Dymond said: "There has been sufficient evidence for decades to warrant an inquiry - Whitehall's perpetual resistance and disdain will hopefully be one of many elements exposed in the eventual inquiry.

"This 'concession' comes after formidable cross bench support - the moral argument for an inquiry and full and decent compensation had been overwhelmingly won after MP after MP in debate stood and revealed the most appalling circumstances of their constituents affected by the contaminated blood scandal."

The blood scandal particularly impacted on haemophiliacs - those who have an inherited condition which prevents their blood from clotting. During the 1970s and 80s, they received treatments which saw them administered blood products which allowed their blood to clot - for example when visiting the dentist or under going surgery.

However, such was the demand for these, drug companies sourced blood from donors who they paid.

As a result, blood often came from prisoners or drug addicts in the US.

The blood sourced was then blended with many others to make the treatments. As a consequence, illnesses such as HIV and hepatitis C - which damages the kidneys - were passed on to unwitting victims.

Thousands have subsequently died as a result of being the entirely innocent recipients of such treatments.

Survivors have consistently claimed the NHS were aware of the risks before the products were stopped being used.

Adds Mr Dymond: "Holding those responsible to account for the human devastation of the contaminated blood scandal has been and will continue to be a task akin to those endured by Sisyphus [Greek myth about a man forced to push a rock up a hill only for it to roll back and keep hitting him for all eternity] - a struggle to ensure victims' voices are fully represented in the drawing up of the terms of reference, the form the inquiry should take and the choice of those conducting it.

"There is zero confidence in the integrity of the Department of Health - they have brought that ignominy on themselves after treating haemophiliacs with contempt and disdain for demanding truth and justice and full answers to a man made scandal which never should have happened.

"This inquiry is long overdue and any attempt to lie betray or fob off haemophiliac victims and their families with scraps from the table will be met with the derision it deserves."

Among other victims are Lee Stay, 47, from Ramsgate.

He received the contaminated blood products when he was just 13, in 1983, and became infected with HIV - just at the height of the public's terror at the newly emerging disease. He also was infected with hepatitis C.

He told KoS this week: "I warmly welcome the news an inquiry has now been launched into this disaster. It is a shame this didn't happen many years ago before so many lives were lost.

"It is vital the inquiry has the power to compel witnesses to give evidence under oath and insist on the disclosure of all documents held by government bodies including those withheld due to commercial sensitivity.

"It is unfortunate that because of the length of time passed, some of the professionals who were involved in the decisions made back in the 1970s and 80s are no longer around to give evidence. Whilst the inquiry must look at the full sequence of events that led to this tragedy and have the widest scope possible, it must be remembered that unlike most inquiries, people are still getting sicker and still dying as a result of what happened - myself included.

"To the list of serious, life-threatening illnesses I have suffered as a result of contracting HIV and hepatitis C through contaminated blood, namely PCP [pneumonia], liver failure [resulting in a liver transplant], Burkitt lymphoma [blood cancer], I can now

CAMPAIGN: Lee Stay and Steve Dymond, left, and, above, how we joined the fight for justice in the case back in May 2015.

add squamous cell carcinoma [skin cancer] to the list, also as a result of a compromised immune system.

"Our devastated community of haemophiliacs need answers and need at least some kind of truth, justice and closure to both those of us still alive and the families of all those that haven't lived to see this day - it is inevitable that more will die before the inquiry is complete so it is important that it doesn't take years to arrive at it's conclusion.

"In the meantime, it should also be remembered that many are suffering severe financial hardship as a result of not being able to work, obtain life insurance and needing constant care for example."

News an inquiry would be held came after months of mounting pressure on the PM and, last weekend, saw the leaders of six political parties - among them Labour's Jeremy Corbyn and the DUP's Alene Foster, who recently struck a deal with Theresa May to give her a working majority in the Commons - sign a letter sup

■ **Continued on page 16**

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■ Continued from page 15

port the call for an inquiry.

Just last weekend, KoS called for the PM to take the brave step and give the green light to a full and open examination of the facts behind the scandal.

The PM said: "Thousands of patients expected the world-class care our NHS is famous for, but they were failed.

"At least 2,400 people died and thousands more were exposed to hepatitis C and HIV, with life-changing consequences.

"The victims and their families who have suffered so much pain and hardship deserve answers as to how this could possibly have happened.

"While this government has invested record amounts to support the victims, they have been denied those answers for too long and I want to put that right."

Spearheading the campaign recently had been former Labour MP health secretary Andy Burnham. Now Greater Manchester mayor, he had claimed in the Commons that a "criminal cover-up on an industrial scale" had taken place.

Among allegations raised by Mr Burnham was the case of Ken Bullock, who died in 1998, and whose widow said his diagnosis of hepatitis had been changed to being a clinical alcoholic in 1983.

The moderate drinker was possibly refused a liver transplant based on his falsified medical records saying he was an alcoholic, Mr Burnham said.

It had also been suggested that the withholding of results led to infections being passed on to people living with the victims, the former minister said.

PM: Theresa May this week

Responding to news of the inquiry, Mr Burnham said: "This is a major breakthrough and a vindication of all those people who have campaigned bravely throughout the decades, often in the wilderness.

"But this day has taken far too long in coming.

"People have suffered enough through contaminated blood. They have been let down by all political parties and public bodies.

"It is now incumbent on those organisations to work together to give the families truth, justice and accountability without any further delay or obstruction.

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PROTESTS: Campaigners have fought hard for an inquiry

"It is essential that this inquiry looks at both the original negligence and the widespread cover-up that followed.

"It is also crucial that organisations representing victims are fully consulted on the form, membership and structure of the inquiry.

"Just as with Hillsborough, there must be a 'families first' approach at all times."

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn welcomed the announcement of the inquiry, which he said should have the potential to trigger prosecutions. He explained: "It was obviously a serious systemic failure.

"I think we need the strongest possible inquiry that can if necessary lead to prosecution actions as a result, but above all get to the bottom of it.

"A broad, public, inquisitive inquiry is very important."

Health secretary Jeremy Hunt will meet the families of victims of the contaminated blood scandal before deciding on the style of a public inquiry, a health minister has said.

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CAMPAIGN: KoS front pages

Philip Dunne said the decision to establish a "Hillsborough-style" panel or an inquiry led by a judge would be taken after consultation with families, which he hoped would be completed by the autumn.

Many of those fighting for justice have also called for significant compensation payments to be made to those affected by the scandal.

Liz Carroll, chief executive of the Haemophilia Society, said the government now needed to move quickly to agree the remit of the inquiry with the affected community.

"For decades people with bleeding disorders and their families have sought the truth," she said.

"Instead, they were told by the government that no mistakes were made while it repeatedly refused to acknowledge evidence of negligence and a subsequent cover up. Finally, they will have the chance to see justice."

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LEGEND: Tom Jones romped though the hits at the age of 77. All pictures: ANDY ARCHER

Young and old hit right note

Tom Jones and Olly Murs headlined outdoor shows in Canterbury last week to big crowds

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

MUSIC-LOVERS got a double-helping of big name stars in the sun last weekend as pop star Olly Murs then the legendary crooner Sir Tom Jones, entertained the crowds at back-to-back outdoor shows in Canterbury.

Both performed at the home of Kent County Cricket Club in the city, and the weather was kind for both.

In fact such were the conditions on Saturday night, those up to two miles away could hear the Welsh superstar's voice as he belted out hit after hit.

The performances were the latest shows to take place as part of the summer concerts staged by the venue.

Previous acts have included the likes of Madness, Simply Red, Bryan Adams, UB40 and Elton John.

Olly Murs, whose hits include Heart Skips A Beat, Dance With Me Tonight and Please Don't Let Me Go, leapt to fame on the X Factor and is now a chart regular.

Sir Tom needs little introduction with a career which stretches back to the 1960s.

His biggest hits include Green, Green Grass of Home, Delilah, What's New Pussycat and It's Not Unusual.

He romped through the hits just hours after he had performed at Switzerland's Montreux Festival the night before.

The Canterbury show was the latest in a string of outdoor shows he is performing across Europe this summer.

FRESH: Olly Murs proved a great hit at the Spitfire Ground in Canterbury on the Friday

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LOVING LOCAL

How boats were collected to help turn fortunes of war

The county played a key role in saving the lives of thousands at Dunkirk

By Chris Murphy

IN late May 1940, Douglas Tough received a phone call from the Admiralty informing him of a mission.

Mr Tough, who ran the Tough Brothers Boatyard in Teddington, was tasked with requisitioning and collecting any boat of a certain size and do it immediately.

It was one of the first stages of a military mission so daring it is as impressive a feat today, some 77 years later, as it was remarkable then.

"Fortunately," Mr Tough would later reflect, "the boats were there, in muddy estuaries, in deserted moorings along the coasts of Kent and Sussex and in the quiet reaches of the Thames."

Between him and his colleague, Ron Lenthall, they collected more than 100 boats and towed them to Sheerness where they were fuelled before heading further down the coast to gather at Ramsgate. Here a mix of naval officers and experienced volunteers boarded the boats ready for a mission unlike any other.

There they were joined by the like of RNLI lifeboats from Walmer, Dungeness, Margate, Ramsgate and Hythe.

For many boat-owners, the discovery of their boats having gone missing was something of a surprise, with a number calling the police to report them as stolen.

It perhaps shouldn't have come as too much of a surprise to them.

On May 14 an announcement had been made on the BBC that "the Admiralty have made an order requesting all owners of self-propelled pleasure craft between 30ft and 100ft in length to send all particulars to the Admiralty within 14 days if they have not already been offered or requisitioned".

The call was made as top secret plans were being hatched which would become known as the Miracle of Dunkirk.

At the end of the month a major blockbuster film, directed by the acclaimed Christopher Nolan, is released. It will again shine a light on the remarkable rescue mission which saw hundreds of thousands of Allied troops rescued from aerial bombardment by the German hoardes as they surged through northern Europe.

It was one of the darkest hours for Kent and Great Britain - but the hastily organised Operation Dynamo could hardly have run any smoother considering the circumstances.

Without it, Britain would have lost the war, claims one prominent Kent historian.

Dynamo was the moment the MoD despatched hundreds of little ships - pleasure craft and fishing vessels - from Kent ports to the beaches of Dunkirk in France, to rescue Allied troops forced back by Hitler's maurading war machine.

Prime minister Winston Churchill had sent the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) into France to help defend our Channel neighbours from any potential German invasion.

But the Nazis took France by surprise, cutting off French, British and Belgian troops and forcing them back up to the coast.

From May 26 they started to gather on the Dunkirk beaches, their hopes of preventing German forces lying in tatters.

The scale of the potential damage to British forces was highlighted when Churhcill described the backtracking of Allied troops as "a colossal military disaster" in the House of Commons.

He said the "whole root and core and brain of the British Army", in the form of the BEF, was about to be struck down or captured by the Nazi forces including three Panzer divisions.

But then Hitler made a military error of his own. He called a halt to the progress of his ground troops, preferring to use his air force to deal with the cornered Allies.

This gave the men time to at least dig in as an evacuation plan was drawn up.

Operation Dynamo which took its name after the operational centre in Dover under vice-admiral Bertram Ramsay, was drawn up to rescue as many of the stranded troops as possible.

Setting sail from Ramsgate, the flotilla of small vessels started crossing the Channel en route to the French coast.

The Dunkirk beaches made docking on larger ships impossible, the small vessels - more than 700 in total - created a chance for survival of the backbone of British military power.

Sailing back and forth, the first day of the Dunkirk evacuation saw 7,669 men saved. Eventually, that figure would stand at a staggering 338,226.

Many were taken to the fleet of 39 British destroyers, cruisers, and others sitting out of range in deeper water.

For the men on the beaches, it was hell enduring almost ceaseless attacks while standing shoulder deep in the Channel for hours awaiting rescue.

When it was all done, the BEF suffered 68,000 casualties who were dead, wounded, missing, or captured.

Everything was left behind in France, including 2,472 guns, 20,000 motorcycles and 65,000 other vehicles, including 445 tanks.

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MISSION: Operation Dynamo save hundreds of thousands of men

The escape was so frantic, the men also had to abandon 377,000 tons of stores, 68,000 tons of ammunition and 147,000 tons of fuel.

Even at sea, the toll was high - six British and three French destroyers went down from either air or U-boat attacks. Nine other major ships were sunk.

It was later calculated for every seven men saved, one was captured and sent to work in German labour camps and factories.

Yet it was the remarkable co-ordinated achievement which lives on for long in the memory.

For the craft that survived, they remained revered.

The paddle steamer the Medway Queen completed the most round trips at seven picking up 7,000 men and earning herself the nickname Heroine of Dunkirk. She is currently moored at Gillingham Pier with a Memories of Dunkirk display on board, and is welcoming visitors.

Two years ago, to mark the 75th anniversary, a flotilla of craft retraced their steps to mark the anniversary, sailing from Ramsgate as they did all those years ago.

Dr Martin Watts, principal research fellow at Christ Church University, is an expert on military, political and social effects of conflict.

He told us: "Without Operation Dynamo, Britain would have lost the war.

"There is debate among historians on what exactly Hitler would have done with Britain had he won, with many believing he would have ignored our island if he was left alone to do what he pleased with mainland Europe.

"So the little ships really did turn around the war effort, but not without some cost.

"Without them, the British army would have been killed or captured, but while the men were brought back, virtually all equipment was left behind.

"It was important to build up our forces once more, and so it emerged that the work of the little ships turned around the result of the Second World War."

Churchill at the time warned it was not at that time at least, something to celebrate. He said: "Wars are not won by evacuations".

But it was also the trigger for the prime minister's most famous speech.

While informing the Commons of the success of Dynamo, he told MPs: "We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

Battle of Britain theme is big hit at castle's classical night

As our pictures show, last weekend's event at Leeds Castle was a spectacular success, bathed in sunshine and ending with a dramatic firework display

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

THE sun shone, the Spitfires roared and the music roused the thousands of spectators, as the Leeds Castle Classical Concert proved another bit hit last weekend.

Held in the grounds of the historic castle, crowds were kept entertained with music from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, plus a full supporting line-up, and concluding with a magnificent firework display.

Host of the event was boy soprano turned TV star and DJ, Aled Jones.

He said: "It was a pleasure to host the 39th classical concert against the stunning backdrop of Leeds Castle on a beautiful summer's evening. Thanks to everyone involved, including the great crowd. It was a memorable experience."

Taking a Battle of Britain theme, the event was opened in spectacular style by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force.

The band were joined on stage by the Patriot Girls, a trio who last performed at the event in 2013. They entertained the crowd with old wartime favourites White Cliffs of Dover, Long Way to Tipperary, Pack Up Your Troubles and We'll Meet Again.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by artistic director John Rigby, featured soloists, the tenor Anthony Flaum, and soprano Katie Bird. They wowed the audience with Nessun Dorma and Rule Britainnia.

The second half was opened in spectacular style as a 1940s Spitfire took to the skies, accompanying the Spitfire Prelude and the Dambusters March.

Richard Millward, event director for Heritage Events, which organised the event, said: "The perfect co-ordination of the Spitfire to the music and the farewell wing tip as it headed into the glorious sunset and watching the Garrison field guns nail every cue of the 1812 Overture in perfect symmetry with stunning fireworks were real highlights for me and many others."

Next year's event has been confirmed for July 14 and will be the 40th anniversary of the popular event.

Tickets are already on sale now.

SHADE: Many brought a picnic to enjoy the occasion in the sun

HIT: The Patriot Girls, above, sing the classics to a huge crowd at Leeds Castle, which finished with a huge firework display, left.

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Summer Family Activities

OUTDOOR THEATRE

With Rochester Castle and Upnor Castle as the backdrop, there is no better stage to watch enthralling performances this summer.

18 JULY HAMLET AT UPNOR CASTLE
3 AUGUST HAMLET AT ROCHESTER CASTLE
For tickets http://tickets.medway.gov.uk/
Gates open: 6.15pm; Performance starts: 7.15pm
Hamlet has everything going for him. A wealthy prince living the good life. But when his father dies, his world starts to fall apart.
His mother marries his uncle and Hamlet loses his succession to the throne. He struggles to understand his new world. He faces a difficult choice: to accept it or rebel against it.
Changeling Theatre presents Hamlet - Shakespeare's enduring tale of human mortality and struggle at outdoor venues across Kent this Summer to mark the company's 20th anniversary.
All seating is unreserved. Please bring your own blankets/low-backed chairs - seating is not provided. You are welcome to bring your own picnics & refreshments. There are no refreshments available on site.

3 AUGUST CHEER UP YORIK! CRAFTS, 10.30AM TO 3.30PM
Inspired by Changeling Theatre's performance of Shakespeare's Hamlet, taking place in the castle grounds this evening, young people can design and decorate their own Yorik, the famous skull which features in this play, one of Shakespeare's best loved works. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
80p per child, free entry to Tower Two, Rochester Castle

15 AUGUST WIND IN THE WILLOWS AT UPNOR CASTLE
For tickets http://www.boxtreeproductions.co.uk/
Gates open: 5.30pm; Performance starts: 6.30pm
Join Mole as he says 'dang' and 'blast it!', throws down his broom and sets off on an adventure out of his hole. On his journey he meets the effervescent Ratty who shows him the wonders of picnics and messing about on the river, Badger, the wise old sage of the woods and Toad of toad hall, whose exploits cause all manner of mischief and upheaval. When the Otters and Stoats take over Toad Hall it's up to Mole and Ratty, Badger and Toad to retake control. With Inventive staging, original songs and magical storytelling we invite audiences to enjoy this classic tale of adventure, friendship and picnics in Boxtree Production's unique and energetic way!
All seating is unreserved. Please bring your own blankets/low-backed chairs - seating is not provided. You are welcome to bring your own picnics & refreshments. There are no refreshments available on site.

15 AUGUST MAKE YOUR OWN WIND IN THE WILLOWS CHARACTER CRAFTS, 10.30AM TO 3.30PM
Inspired by Boxtree Production's performance of Wind in the Willows, taking place in the castle grounds this evening, young people can design and decorate their own character from the classic story - who will you choose: Ratty, Mole, Badger or the infamous Toad? Children must be accompanied by an adult.
80p per child, plus admission fee, Upnor Castle

30 AUGUST PRIDE & PREJUDICE AT ROCHESTER CASTLE
For tickets http://www.chapterhouse.org/
Gates open: 6.30pm; Performance starts: 7.30pm
Take a step back in time with Chapterhouse Theatre Company to meet Elizabeth Bennet, Jane Austen's most loveable heroine. When Elizabeth meets the rude and abrupt Mr Darcy, she loathes him at first sight. But is there more to him than meets the eye? Brought to life by award winning writer Laura Tuner, this brand-new adaptation celebrates the 200th Anniversary of Jane Austen's death and promises to be the most splendid evening of the summer.
So, join friends and family as you picnic under a beautiful summer sky and lose yourself in this unforgettable love story. After all, it is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.
All seating is unreserved. Please bring your own blankets/low-backed chairs - seating is not provided. You are welcome to bring your own picnics & refreshments. There are no refreshments available on site.

30 AUGUST MAKE YOUR OWN LIZZIE & DARCY CHARACTER CRAFTS IN TOWER TWO 10.30AM TO 3.30PM
Inspired by Chapterhouse Theatre's performance of Pride & Prejudice, taking place in the castle grounds this evening, young people can design and decorate their own character from this classic story - who will you choose: Lizzie or Darcy?
Children must be accompanied by an adult.
80p per child, free entry to Tower Two, Rochester Castle

31 AUGUST PETER PAN AT UPNOR CASTLE
For tickets http://www.chapterhouse.org/
Gates open: 5.30pm; Performance starts: 6.30pm
Chapterhouse Theatre Company are delighted to present an all new production of Peter Pan. Join Wendy, Michael and John Darling on their adventures with Peter, far away on the magical island of Neverland. There they encounter the enchanting mermaids, magical fairies and the cruellest pirate of them all, Captain Hook. Presented by special arrangement with Samuel French and in support of Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity, J.M.Barrie's timeless classic is brought to life in a brand new adaptation by award winning writer Laura Turner, with beautifully designed costumes, music and songs. Join Peter and his friends for what promises to be the most magical evening of the summer. All seating is unreserved. Please bring your own blankets/low-backed chairs - seating is not provided. You are welcome to bring your own picnics & refreshments. There are no refreshments available on site.

31 AUGUST MAKE YOUR OWN PETER PAN CHARACTER CRAFTS IN THE BARRACK BLOCK, 10.30AM TO 3.30PM
Inspired by Chapterhouse Theatre's performance of Peter Pan, written by JM Barrie, taking place in the castle grounds this evening, young people can design and decorate their own character from this classic story - who will you choose: Peter, Wendy, Tinkerbell or Hook?
80p per child, plus admission fee, Upnor Castle

SUMMER HOLIDAYS
Guildhall Museum

Sat 22 July – Sun 3 Sept, 10am-5pm
BATTLE OF MEDWAY TRAIL
Take part in our trail around the museum based on the Battle of Medway exhibition for a chance to win a small prize.
80p per child, free entry to the museum

Sat 22 July – Sun 3 Sept, Tuesdays –Fridays, 10.30am-3.30pm
BATTLE OF MEDWAY FAMILY CRAFTS
Join our hands-on family craft activities & artist sessions based around our 'Journey to Chatham' exhibition, part of the Battle of Medway commemorations featuring Dutch newspaper reports of the Battle and the construction plans for the new fort at Sheerness. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
80p, free entry to the museum

ROCHESTER CASTLE

Sat 22 July – Sun 3 Sept, 10am-6pm (last admission 5.15pm)
ROCHESTER CASTLE CELEBRATION TRAIL
Take part in our heritage trail around the keep looking for clues to find out why Rochester Castle is celebrating this year for a chance to win a small prize.
80p per child, plus admission fee.

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10.30am-3.30pm
FAMILY CRAFT ACTIVITIES
Join our hands-on family craft activity to make your own medieval masterpieces. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
80p per child, free entry to Tower Two.

Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 August, 10am to 5pm
MEDIEVAL MERRIMENT
Come down to the castle to experience life in medieval times. Walk around the Medieval Siege Society living history camp, and watch in awe as the Trebuchet Siege engine is fired! There will also be men-at-arms, archery & falconry displays, a courtly jester, have-a-go archery, trader's stalls, refreshments and children's crafts.
Free, normal admission applies to the Keep.

MAKE YOUR OWN SWORD & SHIELD 25 July & 15 Aug & 29 Aug
MAKE YOUR OWN MEDIEVAL BRACELET 27 July & 17 Aug
MAKE YOUR OWN JESTER'S HAT 1 Aug & 22 Aug
MAKE YOUR OWN KING OF THE CASTLE CROWN 8 Aug & 31 Aug
MAKE YOUR OWN MINI SIEGE ENGINE 10 Aug & 24 Aug

UPNOR CASTLE

Sat 22 July – Sun 3 Sept, 10am-6pm (last admission 5.15pm)
BATTLE OF MEDWAY TRAIL
Take part in our trail around the castle looking for clues to find out what happened at Upnor Castle during the Battle of Medway for a chance to win a small prize.
80p per child, plus admission fee.

BATTLE OF MEDWAY FAMILY ACTIVITIES & CRAFTS
Join our family activities based on the Battle of Medway commemorations. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
Free, plus admission fee. These activities are kindly supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

MEET A 1667 SOLDIER
Sun 23 July, Fri 4 Aug, Fri 11 Aug, Fri 18 Aug, Fri 25 Aug, Sun 27 Aug, Sat 9 Sept & Sun 10 Sept, 11am, 1pm & 3pm
Local actors from Play On Words Theatre Company are delighted to introduce you to their Georgian soldier, William Webster. Webster was stationed at Upnor Castle in 1787, so join him on a tour around the castle as he explains what life was like here then and at the time of the Battle of Medway in 1667.

PRINT YOUR OWN SHIP'S FLAG OR BAG
with artist Christina Lamb Mon 24 July, 10.30am-3.30pm
Join our drop-in artist-led session to design your own Battle of Medway print for a flag or tote bag. All the print screens are inspired by the Guildhall Museum's collection.
Please note that this is a change to the foam stamp activity previously advertised.

MAKE YOUR OWN ROYAL CHARLES SHIP
Wed 26 July, 10.30am-3.30pm
Join our hands-on family craft activity to make your own flagship – remember to keep it safe from the Dutch!

KNITTING THE BATTLE OF MEDWAY
with artist Dan Chilcott Fri 28 July, 10am-12noon
Join artist Dan Chilcott to knit your own Battle of Medway inspired design, linked to a special Battle of Medway artwork which will be display at Upnor Castle, Eastgate House and the Rochester Hub this summer.

DESIGN YOUR OWN BADGE OR MAGNET
with artist Christina Lamb 31 July, 10.30am-3.30pm
Join our drop-in artist-led session to design your own Battle of Medway badge or magnet. All the original stamps are inspired by the Guildhall Museum's collection.

DECORATE A CANNONBALL
Wed 2 Aug, 10.30am -3.30pm
Join our hands-on family craft activity to decorate your own cannonball – get ready to fire it at the Dutch!

PAINTING THE BATTLE OF MEDWAY
with artist Kevin Clarkson Mon 21 Aug & Wed 30 Aug, 10.30am-3.30pm
Local artist Kevin Clarkson meticulously researched the Battle of Medway to create several new paintings of the events at Upnor in 1667 for our anniversary commemorations this year. Join Kevin on site to draw your own Battle of Medway masterpiece.

BATTLE OF MEDWAY MINI DRAMA SCHOOL
Wed 23 Aug - Thur 24 Aug, 10am -3.30pm
Play on Words presents an amazing opportunity for budding stars of the stage to work with professional actors in a unique venue this Summer Holiday. Over two days you will learn all about creating and acting in a play, and the Mini Drama School will end with a performance for family and friends.
The two-day school costs £40. To book your place, contact info@playonwordstheatre.com or 07971512209

DRAW A MINI MASTERPIECE
Fri 1 Sept, 10.30am -3.30pm
Join our hands-on family craft activity to draw your own mini masterpiece inspired by the Battle of Medway.

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Summertime - School's Out

Guide to

Want a fun day out? Then you need look no further than what's on your doorstep

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

WITH the school summer holidays just around the corner, families across the county will be looking for ideas of how best to enjoy the fine weather.

Of course, they need not travel far, as there are a host of attractions right here on our doorstep to take advantage of during the summer months.

Here are some suggestions on where to take the family and enjoy the very best that Kent has to offer.

Beaches

Kent boasts some of the very best beaches in the country, with many of our seaside spots winning prestigious gongs.

The Blue Flag and Seaside Awards mean those visiting can be sure that they are clean, safe and meet the highest environmental standards, as well as the tough international bathing water quality standards.

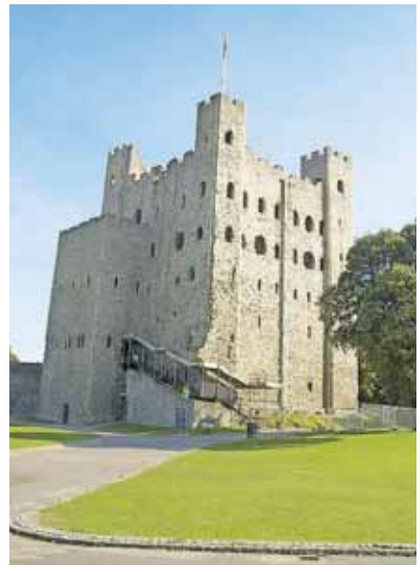
In Thanet, Minnis Bay, West Bay, St Mildreds, Botany Bay, Joss Bay and Stone Bay are all popular in the summer months, as are Ramsgate Main Sands, Westbrook Bay and Viking Bay in Broadstairs.

However, there are also glorious beaches to enjoy in other areas of the county, such as Sheerness, Minster Leas, Reculver, Herne Bay and Leysdown, as well Tankerton, which hosts the famous Whitstable Oyster Festival next weekend (see page 35).

Wildlife

Port Lympne, between Ashford and Hythe, and its sister park of Howletts, near Canterbury, are unquestionably popular choices for the summer, offering visitors the chance to see hundreds of rare and endangered animals, including elephants, lions, tigers giraffes, and even go on safari.

For those who like to stretch their legs, Port Lympne is set in over 600 acres, with the park boasting big cats, small cats, primates and gorillas, as well as the opportunity to discover life sized pre historic creatures in Dinosaur Forest.



TREAT: From glorious beaches to majestic castles

Elsewhere, Eagle Heights in Eynsford near Sevenoaks showcases some of the most extraordinary birds of prey during regular flying displays.

Meanwhile, Canterbury boasts Wingham Wildlife Park and Wildwood in nearby Herne which attract large crowds during the summer months.

Castles

Kent offers some of the most fascinating castles around, and what better way to spend the holidays than exploring their rich history?

Leeds Castle near Maidstone, dubbed "the loveliest castle in the

■ Continued on page 27

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■ Continued from page 25

world" is held in such high esteem, decorators at the White House even took inspiration from some its interior designs.

Alternatively you could visit Dover Castle, which has protected Britain's shores for centuries, defending the realm from invaders, tyrants and rebels.

Rochester Castle in Medway is one of the best preserved in England and offers far more than a history lesson, after recently hosting a gig by popstar Craig David, or in the west, you can relive the romance between King Henry VIII and one-time resident Anne Boleyn at Hever Castle, near Edenbridge.

Margate attractions

Margate is surely the county's best known resort. Its seafront has been one of the county's biggest attractions for decades, with its broad Main Sands acting as a honeypot to thousands of sun-worshippers.

And that's not all. Its Dreamland amusement park has been recently revamped to the tune of £25m and is drawing in visitors from all over

The venue is free to explore and still has the Grade II-listed Scenic Railway at its heart, but is supported by a range of new rides as well as street food options and a tree-top bar.

Just over the road from Dreamland sits the hugely-successful Turner Contemporary art gallery, which has welcomed well over two million visitors since it opened six years ago, and is set to host the prestigious Turner Prize in 2019.

Also free to enter, it showcases a range of contemporary and historical art in new and dynamic ways and has proved a huge hit since it first opened five years ago.

THRILLS: Margate's Dreamland is back on good form this summer

PEDAL: Why not take the bikes out for a relaxing ride?

Museums

Kent also offers a whole host of museums, where you can learn more about the county's towns and villages.

Chatham's Historic Dockyard alows visitors to discover how ships, including HMS Victory, were designed and built and learn more about the Battle of Medway, for which there were a number of events earlier this summer to commemorate its 350th anniversary.

Elsewhere in the county, Maidstone Museum attracts a number of big exhibitions, and is currently showcasing a history of the board game.

Alternatively, the Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery tells the story of Kent's spa town and also boasts a large toy collection dating back to the 1700s.

Walking & cycling

For a county which prides itself on its breathtaking countryside, there are few better ways to experience just what makes it so great than by stretching your legs and taking in a stroll.

There are hundreds of walks through some of the most beautiful surroundings, which wind along cliff-tops, through orchards, past vineyards and plenty more besides.

And if that all sounds a bit like hard work, then why not take to two wheels to explore the county on a bike?

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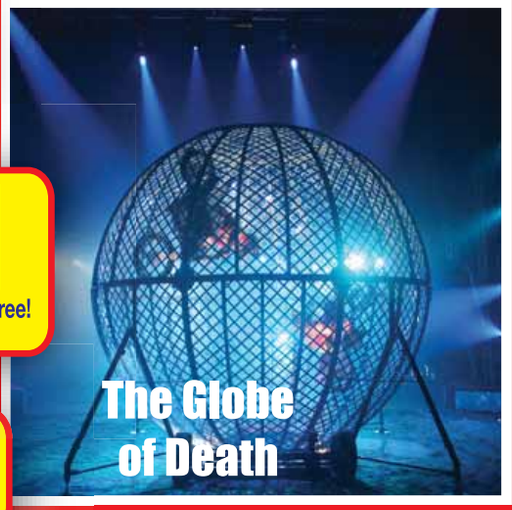

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PERFORMING: Slapstick fun with Trash Test Dummies who will be performing in a temporary performance space in Kingsmead Car Park

Festival unveils stellar line-up for its annual extravaganza

From global stars to emerging talent, the Canterbury Festival is back in style

A BLEND of big names and everything from drama to classical to comedy has been confirmed after the Canterbury Festival unveiled its line-up for later this year.

Among those performing will be the singer Imelda May, singer-songwriter Newton Faulkner and the St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra.

Dance fans will be served up Ballet Black while Michelin-starred chef Tom Kerridge will be in conversation with food writer Xanthe Clay.

And that forms the mere tip of another major cultural iceberg that floats into the city this autumn.

Festival director Rosie Turner says: "The line-up for 2017 is one of the strongest ever. It positions young talent from Kent alongside international names in music and performance. From the quirky to the classical, there's something for the culture-vulture and fun-seeker alike."

The festival's classical offering includes a dash of Russian romance, courtesy of the St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, with a repertoire of Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, and Rimsky-Korsakov. Uzbekistan-born French pianist Mikhail Rudy's programme takes in Russian composer Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition – and a musical interpretation of the art of Chagall; while pianist Freddy Kempf returns to the festival with a heady rendition of Rachmaninov's Etudes Tableaux.

The 1920s vintage Spiegeltent will return to Kingsmead, with the travelling venue hosting a string of shows including Australian circus sensation Casus and family-friendly circus of a more slap-stick variety, Trash Test Dummies.

Soul star Ruby Turner will perform there, and wine expert Oz Clarke will also hold court, with a final performance from the Average White Band's Hamish Stuart rounding it off.

Tasmin Little – one of the country's best-loved violinists – premieres Charles Villiers Stanford's Variations for Violin Solo and Orchestra with the internationally acclaimed English Chamber Orchestra in Canterbury Cathedral, along with Vaughan Williams' The Lark Ascending. It will also premiere the latest Donnelly & Maltby production, The Masters of Mystery – a festival-commissioned musical adventure by Canterbury-based composer Ethan Lewis Maltby.

With a spotlight too on local talent, a day is dedicated to Canterbury Sound, the psychedelic and prog rock scene of the 1960s and 1970s that saw the rise of Soft Machine and Caravan.

New to the festival this year, Made in Kent: Dance showcases three Kent-based dancers and choreographers.

It joins Made in Kent: Comedy, now in its second year, featuring Kent's best comedic talent through its annual comedy competition and Made in Kent: Theatre which, in its third year, performs The Lamentable Tragedie of the Canterbury Strangler.

And if that wasn't enough, there's the stunning Tapestry of Light by Irene Barberis, a 36m long glowing artwork that lights up Canterbury Cathedral's Chapter House.

The Canterbury Festival runs from October 14 to November 4. For details see canterburyfestival.co.uk.

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Women Seeking

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CATHY, 54yr old widow, I'm kind and warm hearted and hoping you will call me. Looks unimportant must have GSOH. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427653**

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+ Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3002 Box 419673**

ATTRACTIVE lady, 57yrs, great sense of humour, now looking for good times and good memories. Hoping to meet gent any age. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427883**

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. **Tel: No: 0906 515 3010 Box: 409715**

GEMMA, 25yrs, green eyed brunette lady, loves to read raunchy books so has a huge imagination, hoping to expand upon it in real life. Call me. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427881**

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. **Tel: 0906 515 3018 Box: 413399**

ATTRACTIVE lonely widow, mid 70s seeking gent for friendship. Pls call or text. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427879**

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3022 Box 421375**

STUNNINGLY attractive black lady, 50s, with blissful imagination, you have to call to hear what's on offer, you won't be sorry!! **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427877**

TAMIKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded. Pls call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3006 Box 422365**

CULTURED lady with wicked sense of humour, late 60s seeking humorous man for purposeful relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427875**

SAMANTHA, 35yrs, attractive brunette with own business, seeks adventurous gent for casual relationship. **Tel: 0906 515 3034 Box 425979**

ATTRACTIVE lady, 51yrs, loves the countryside, walking, fun times. WLTM a genuine man for romance, relationship. Call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427873**

HARRIETt 42yrs, blue eyed brunette with long lets and decent curves! Looking for a cheeky adventurous man for fun only. I live alone so can accommodate and can travel. Discretion assured. ACA. Give me a try. **Tel: 0906 515 3030 Box 426205**

CARMEL, open minded naughty lady seeks a broad minded strict man to unleash her wilder side. Age/looks unimportant but no time wasters please. **Tel: 0906 515 3042 Box 426851**

RACHAEL, 42yrs, naughty girl who needs lots of pleasure. Call me. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427871**

SONIA, mature lady, pretty and feminine with fair hair. Loves to socialise, walking, car boot sales and more. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427647**

CAROLINE, 42yrs, well educated, sophisticated "some call me posh" married lady, looking for no strings midweek liaisons. **Tel: 0906 515 3026 Box 427533**

PAMELA early 70s with softly rounded body! If you are a tender male with passion then call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427635**

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PIA, Asian lady, 57yrs, very caring and a little subservient and quiet. I am a good cook and loyal friend. Pls text me if you are kind man 55+ **Text Only. Mailbox 4013378**

MICHELLE, 28yrs blue eyed blonde with busty figure. I'm very mature for my age and hope to meet a man to care for. I'm willing to please. Call or text me and I will get straight back to you. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427649**

NATALIA, black beauty! I am late 50s but still fit with a good figure and lovely skin and eyes. I would like to meet a nice white gentleman, older than myself for chats, maybe more. **Text Only. Mailbox 4107799**

MARGARET is in her 60s, she's young looking, blue-eyed blonde, kind, loving with lots of qualities. Seeking mature gent for mutual life's pleasures. Please call me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427493**

JULIE, 68yrs but very fit and young looking. Married to an older gent so hoping to meet someone much much younger. Text Me. **Text Only: 4193435**

TRUDY, 70 something lady seeks gent. I'm broadminded and will respond to all calls. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427471**

KAREN, late 50's seeking discreet gent any age/area for daytime meetings. **Text Only. Box: 4194757**

JASMINE, petite Black lady 51yrs, varied interests. Seeking white man for relationship. Looks unimportant. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427657**

FELICITY, "my friends call me posh" I'm not really. Call me to see. I'm 58yrs, curvy, blonde extensions and very good for my age. ACA. **Text Only. Box: 4043583**

MATURE lady, slim and youthful, divorcee, loves laughter, life and everything. WLTM gent for continued fun and passion. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427655**

JANET, late 40's divorcee, own home and car looking to spice up my life with some fun. Discreet men only please, I'm not ready for a full on relationship, casual chats. **Text Only. Box: 4189331**

JANE, attractive 50 something lady. I love to cook and care for my man. Is that you? ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427651**

HELLO I am a black lady, 60yrs young with a great personality and lovely looks. Call if you are looking to meet someone like me, or text me. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427585**

Men Seeking

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MALE 60, 6ft, blue eyes, broad shoulders, size 11 shoes, a real handful! Seeks a fit mature busty woman for fun times. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6001755**

THANET male, retired, 5ft5, dark hair, smart, OHOC, likes walks, travel in motorhome, looking for a single, attractive lady with similar interests in Thanet. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427557**

SOLVENT male, older but young at heart, looking for a young lady to wine and dine and spoil and pamper and in turn to pamper me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427443**

TALL, lively old boy, into red wine, garlic and Radio 3, seeks tactile lady for company and jolly jaunts. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425021**

MALE, 58, slim build, 5ft9, brown eyes, hard working, enjoys fishing and socialising, looking for no stings attached fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427173**

HI ladies, looking for either NSA fun or LTR. I am single/work/live in own house. **Text only. Mailbox: 4509325**

LOCAL 70 year old young male, now single, nice appearance and dresser, looking for fun and friendship with a lady, 55-70, possible holidays. Can travel. Please ring. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426897**

LIVELY mature gent, OHAC, near sea in Folkestone, into red wine, garlic and Radio 3, seeks lady companion/lover, 58-68 yo. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422621**

JANE 55yrs romantic homely lady, hoping to meet a man for outings, to cook and care for. You won't be sorry if you call. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427645**

HELLO I'm 47yrs old, I'm a curvy brunette, varied interests with GSOH, hard working and solvent. WLTM gent taller than me, 5ft3. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427639**

ATTRACTIVE Irish lady, 34yrs seek gent of any age. I'm caring, attractive with lots of offer, call to hear more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427637**

DEBBIE, young looking 49yrs, pretty brunette lady with lots to offer. If you are interested in a meeting a lady like me then please call me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427611**

BECKY, 30 something lady. Full of laughter, very open minded and discreet. Hoping to meet similar minded gent who is older than me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427495**

WELL off man, wanting a young lady for spoiling. I am a sugar daddy looking for a sugar baby. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 427441**

CARING, sociable male, 72, N/S, likes all types of music, walking, meals out, looking for a lady for friendship at first. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426865**

KENT man, retired engineer, solvent, enjoys holidays, meals out, good conversation, WLTM a slim lady, 60-70, with a GSOH, to share these times and hopefully become friends. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426887**

RETIRED, smart, 68 year old, 5ft5, I enjoy eating out, walking, holidays and golf, WLTM a slim, attractive lady, 60-68, for a loving, tender relationship, to enjoy these times with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421853**

MALE divorced, 6ft, well built, seeking fun time girl for good times. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412717**

HARRY 50, ex soldier, 6ft, well built, seeking lady to wine and dine. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 417015**

50YR old divorced white male, passionate, strong, seeking caring lady for romantic, loving relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418641**

MALE, 6ft, brown hair and blue eyes, warm and understanding, likes dining out and cosy nights in, lots of fun, friendship and holidays. Looking for a lady over 48. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426057**

BARRY, 50, 6ft 4ins, well built, divorced gent, looking to date calm and kind lovely lady. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421195**

GUY, 50, 6ft tall, calm and kind, good company, seeking lovely lady for good times and fun and loving. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425369**

JERRY, 66, brown hair, brown eyes, recently widowed, love to walk my dog, WLTM compatible lady for companionship and to see where things go. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426387**

LOCAL man, seeks lady for friendship possibly more, for romantic dates and good times together, hope to hear from you. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426195**

HANDSOME male, mid 40s, dark hair, hazel eyes, wishes to meet appropriate female for fun, friendship and perhaps more, please get in touch if interested. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422587**

MALE, 55, looking for no strings attached friendship, with a lady 60-70, any status. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426133**

EASYGOING male, 49, 6ft, well built, seeks female to wine/dine and have fun times with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 401401**

PROFESSIONAL gentleman, 64, widowed, own house, loves holidays abroad, reading, eating out, eating in and shows, WLTM a lady of similar age to share interests and happy times together hopefully leading to lasting relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425787**

CHRIS, 49yrs honest gent seeks lady 45-55 for socialising, friendship, maybe leading to romance. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425345**

NICE looking 55 year old male WLTM sincere lady, any age, for friendship, outings, holidays abroad etc. Love the sun. **Text only. Mailbox: 4922399**

GENUINE gentleman, family minded, kind, generous seeks lady 55-75 for wining, dining and wine and laughter. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425329**

DENTAL practitioner, 44, 6ft, slim, athletic build, thick dark hair, blue eyes, loves sports, seeks slim feminine sporty lady. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425087**

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CARING sociable, GSOH, slim, attractive, married gent, 67, feels discarded and lonely, seeks likewise lady 60+ for trips out, dining etc. **Text only. Mailbox: 5082918**

SIX foot guy, mature, looking for someone special to spend some quality time with. Please leave me a message I would love to hear from you! **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 420163**

HELLO, mature gentleman looking for a lady who is caring, likes holidays, karaoke, meals out, country walks and cinema. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425401**

GARETH handsome 40's pilot, strong tall build, seeks daytime discreet passion with lady 30-65. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414421**

PETER, sincere solvent gent 70s seeks lady to wine dine, foreign travel, all expenses paid. I would love a traveling companion. Genuine advertiser. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425343**

MALCOLM, 60 something gent, own hair and teeth, GSOH, genuine and Kind WLTM sincere lady to wine and dine. Please call. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425335**

PROFESSIONAL gent, 44yrs, tall, attractive and genuine. Seeks genuine feminine lady for genuine romance. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425333**

PIERS, 56yrs, romantic gent WLTM lady to wine, dine, spoil. I'm kind, caring, generous pls call me. Single mums welcome. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425331**

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MALE, 50s, likes to cross dress, looking for same for friendship and fun. Has to be discreet. **Text only Replies. Mailbox: 4623598**

JOHN, young at heart 65, bi male, looking for casual fun with likeminded male. Maidstone Kent area. Must be discreet. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 5657306**

GAY guy, medium build, likes outdoors, DIY, seeking slim, N/S guy for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403267**

EASY going guy, 68, likes walks, books, seeks N/S guy for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411413**

ROB, bi-curious male, 55, seeks likeminded male, cross dresser/TV. Must be discreet. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426287**

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Maze gets a fresh trim in time for a very traditional challenge

By Chris Britcher

chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

SOME things in life remain as intriguing into adulthood as they do when you're a child - and that must surely apply when it comes to pitting your wits against the complexities of a maze.

From Quex Park in Birchington to Leeds Castle near Maidstone, the stately homes know the challenge posed by a maze continue to entertain, and with the summer holidays just around the corner, they will all be hoping to do brisk business.

And in preparation for just that, Penshurst Place has gone to special efforts to ensure its puzzle will keep people guessing.

The historic grounds near Tonbridge lie within the estate of the ancestral home of the Sidney family and the birthplace of the great Elizabethan poet, courtier and soldier, Sir Philip Sidney. The original medieval house is one of the most complete surviving examples of 14th-century domestic architecture in England.

Cut into a field of maize, it promises "winding walkways and secret shortcuts".

CHALLENGE: The Penshurst maize maze from above - can you escape its clutches?

This time back with a brand new design to challenge visitors, the maize maze has been cut in the shape of the ancient Sidney Oak tree, which has been proudly standing on the estate for around 1,000 years and has self-seeded a new sapling to take over its watch of the house.

The tree - known to regulars as The Bear Oak - had survived centuries before dying last year. Legend has it that the Sidney Oak was planted on November 30, 1554, to celebrate the birth of the soldier and poet Sir Philip Sidney, who served Queen Elizabeth I.

However, the girth of the oak actually suggested an age nearer 1,000 years, which predates the Sidneys' arrival.

The maze, which pays tribute to it, has two routes for visitors to try and unravel - one for younger visitors which takes around 10 minutes to conquer - and the other a larger more challenging option.

All those taking part will be handed a special flag to wave in case they need rescuing.

Entrance to the maze is included within the standard admission price for the grounds - which is £9 for adults and £6 for children, with family tickets also available.

Whacky Races at Kent Life

KENT Life Heritage Farm Park in Sandling is hosting Whacky Races from July 22 to August 6 offering the chance for family tug-of-wars and cheering on ferrets and hamsters in their own competitions.

Berry nice summer fair

A STRAWBERRY Fair takes place in and around St Nicholas Church in Southfleet on July 29.

The event is free to attend, runs from noon to 3pm and features stalls, a barbecue, raffle and more besides.

For details see stnicholassouthfleet.org.uk.

Remembering the King

MARKING the 40th anniversary of the death of Elvis Presley, a special tribute show will take place at Deal's Astor Theatre on August 19.

Memories of Elvis stars Aaron Richie and Andy Kennett.

Bewl paddles up attempt

BEWL Water will host the Neilson SUPU Armada Festival on July 21-23 - the biggest stand-up paddle boarding festival in the country.

It will feature beginner taster sessions and professional competition plus an attempt to get a mass participation Guinness World Record.

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Shops' dinosaur invasion

DINOSAURS will be coming to Royal Victoria Place in Tunbridge Wells during the summer holidays.

Dino Live runs from August 1-28 and showcases the fearsome beasts.

Corbyn smear claim drama

A DRAMA about an attempt to smear Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn with accusations of antisemitism will come to Whitstable on Monday (July 17).

Called the Lynching, the one-woman show is performed by controversial activist Jackie Walker at Whitstable Labour Club at 7pm.

Castle's date with Nell

BROMLEY Little Theatre will stage Jessica Swale's Nell Gwynn at Hever Castle from July 27-29.

The play received critical acclaim during its West End run. Tickets on sale now.

Ships ahoy! Nautical fun

UP to 3,000 people are set will flock to the Faversham Nautical Festival for a celebration of the town's sailing heritage next weekend.

Barges, tugs and even a pirate ship will gather between Town Quay and Faversham Reach with a host of entertainment lined-up on dry land.

Get ready for trip down memory lane with Cilla

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

THE legend of Cilla Black will live on when a musical about her life hits the UK later this year - including a date in Dartford.

The much loved singer and TV presenter passed away two years ago at the age of 72.

Best known for a string of hits in the 1960s - among them Anyone Who Had A Heart and Alfie - she went on to become one of the nation's best-loved TV faces presenting the likes of Blind Date and Surprise Surprise.

Now Cilla - The Musical launches in September with her son, Robert Willis, as the show's executive producer.

The show is a heart-warming musical adaptation of the acclaimed ITV mini-series based on her life story.

Just last week, it was confirmed Kara Lily Hayworth, 28, had beaten off thousands of hopefuls to land the title role (pictured).

She said: "When I was 11 I was shopping with my mum and bumped into Cilla and asked her for an autograph. I told her I wanted to be an actress – she laughed and said 'It's a tough industry, but if you really work hard and go for it, you'll be just fine.' She was a huge inspiration to me as a child. To be chosen to play her is such an honour and I'm so excited to take on the role. To open in her hometown of Liverpool is so special and a real privilege."

Said Mr Willis: "We wanted somebody who wasn't going to impersonate my mum but someone who could capture her spirit. Kara came in with her huge personality and amazing voice – when I saw the response of the audience, I knew she was the one my mum would have wanted."

The new musical, opens in Cilla's hometown at the Liverpool Empire before embarking on a nationwide tour which takes in the Orchard Theatre in Dartford from January 16-20.

Cilla The Musical is produced by Bill Kenwright and Laurie Mansfield and written by Jeff Pope.

Tickets for the shows in Dartford are on sale now.

STAR: Cilla Black in her TV heyday. Picture: ITV

MUSIC: As a pop singer back in 1970

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MasterChef star: We're doing breakfast all wrong

John Torode discusses his new series exploring the cuisines of South Korea and how its changed him

MASTERCHEF star John Torode has been cooking for a long time and he thinks we might be doing breakfast all wrong.

The TV star has just got back from filming in Asia and his travels have prompted him to question why we eat what we do for each meal of the day.

His ideal way to kick off the morning is with the food he ate while he was filming his new series in South Korea - meat, rice soup and kimchi.

Now sitting back on a sofa in a London office, the Australian-born chef, 51, says: "In this country, I still believe, the relationship with food is quite tenuous.

"I think there are still a lot of people who consider it to be fuel and I know quite a few people who just need to eat, it's not ceremonial.

"If you go to Thailand, everybody is concerned about what they are going to have for lunch, in China everybody knows what they are going to have and what things mean and the stories behind them, we aren't like that.

"The thing about Western food that is interesting is the definition of what you are allowed to have for breakfast, what you are allowed to have for lunch and what you are allowed to have for dinner.

"Because I have this thing where I love Asia, for me breakfast is brilliant, I can have rice soup, I can have some kimchi, whatever I like."

But this idea is horrifying to his partner, EastEnders' star Lisa Faulkner. "Lisa says to me, 'that's not breakfast food!' Breakfast food is a piece of toast and a fried egg.

COUPLE: John Torode and partner, the EastEnders star Lisa Faulkner

"What is for lunch? A sandwich. But I don't like bread very much so what do I have?

"But in Asia I can have whatever I want and at dinner time I can have the same thing I had for breakfast if I want to and it's not considered to be weird."

The breakfast was not the only thing Torode fell in love with on his eight-week trip round Korea - he also took a liking to Spam.

"Spam is massive there," he says. "At Thanksgiving you give gift boxes of Spam. Now I'm a Spam lover."

His new passion even extends to an enthusiasm for a bizarre dish dubbed army stew - "a pack of instant noodles, kimchi, stock, Spam, baloney, frankfurters, tomato ketchup, boiled together with sliced cheese across the top. It's delicious, it's bloody fantastic. It's hot dog and noodles, it's brilliant."

He loves it so much he is planning to make it for his four children, saying: "The first thing I thought was 'I'm going to have to make this for somebody because it's just so wrong it's absolutely right, cheesy hot dogs and noodles.

"I haven't made it at home yet, I don't think Lisa will appreciate it but I think my kids will like it."

• John Torode's Korean Food Tour is broadcast of the Good Food channel from July 17.

CCW's art showcase

COMMUNITY College Whitstable is hosting an art show featuring work by pupils from the Swale Academies Trust.

It includes fine art, photography and textiles from CCW, Westlands, North School, Meopham School and Sittingbourne Community College and open to parents only.

It is the first joint visual exhibition between all the high schools who form the trust.

Uptown Girls head here

SINGER-songwriter Elio Pace will be performing the greatest hits of legendary Billy Joel at Maidstone's Hazlitt Theatre on September 7.

The musician, who has toured with a host of big names, including Brian May and Huey Lewis, will perform the Billy Joel Songbook backed with a six-piece band.

He recently performed with Joel's band from the early 1970s.

Dream battle of bands

DREAMLAND is on the hunt for the best local talent as its stages a battle of bands competition - but be quick to get your entry in as all must be in by today (July 16).

The heats begin on July 23 with performances on the new outdoor stage at the park.

To enter, you must be 16-25-years-old, and register at bit.ly/DreamlandBands.

The winners will be announced on September 3.

Dungeness bird spot

THE RSPB is staging a summer bird walk at its reserve in Dungeness on Wednesday (July 19).

Running from 10.30am until noon, it is suitable for everyone from beginners through to bird watching experts.

Led by an expert guide, it is hoped swallows, swifts and hobbies will be spotted and the call of the cuckoo heard. Adults £7, children £3.50.

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A festival worth shelling out for

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

CROWDS are set to flock to Whitstable next weekend as the seaside town's annual festival returns offering a feast of fun, food and processions.

But the event will be very different to years gone by with 2017 seeing a much more laid back atmosphere.

The event, which runs from July 22-24, shifts away from the town centre and the town's popular harbour in the direction of the picturesque Tankerton Slopes this year.

There's still plenty to do for families with a host of free activities to enjoy, including a food fair, making of the grotters and the annual oyster eating competition.

One of the highlights will remain the traditional landing of the oysters, but in order to avoid traffic issues, the procession will head to Tankerton and the activity there, rather than into the town.

Say organisers: "Though significantly different to previous years, visitors and residents alike can still expect an eclectic programme of events for all ages based on the themes of community, heritage and environment.

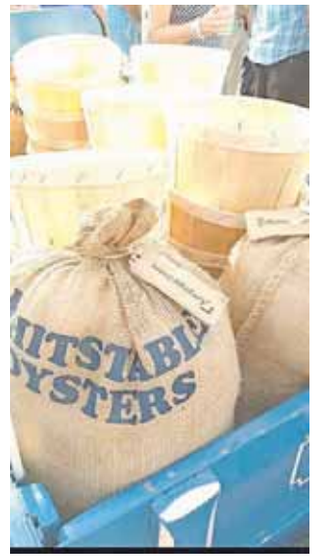
"The Oyster Food Fair will take place on Tankerton Slopes on July 22-23 and visitors can expect a weekend of high quality food, drink and music on the beautiful grass slopes overlooking the sea.

"Although the much loved parade has had to give way to traffic concerns, a new seafront procession will take place from the landing of the oysters on East Quay beach and along the promenade to Tankerton Slopes.

"The procession will culminate here at the food festival with the hugely popular oyster eating challenge."

Certainly it is winding the clock back a few years for a festival which was once a celebration for the local

■ Continued on page 37



TRADITION: The landing of the oysters will take place on July 22

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■ Continued from page 35

residents and became so hugely popular and successful, thousands descended from across Kent and further afield, to soak up the atmosphere and enjoy themselves.

The town's generous helping of pubs and restaurants helped fuel the demand and last year alone it is estimated some 60,000 people headed into the town over the course of the 10 days it was running.

While the festival events themselves all ran peacefully and successfully, there were concerns there were simply too many people pouring into the small town and putting an almighty strain on its roads.

The result is an event which will focus just over the three days. The live music will be much more limited and be concluded by 8pm. The spectacular firework display to round the event off is also gone, as is the outdoor cinema.

What you have is a festival which aims to be much of a community celebration.

There's a quiz night on the Friday evening, local arts and crafts, and plenty to keep the children entertained.

Tankerton Slopes - long home to the town's popular regatta - is well suited to hosting such an event too. Overlooking the sea and lined with picturesque beach huts, it offers space and the opportunity for plenty of entertainment - plus each access to the shingle bay below.

And while the centre of activity has shifted away from the town centre, there are fewer prettier places than Whitstable's High Street and Harbour Street, with little paths linking the key streets and all just moments away from a coastline where there's even a pub on the beach itself.

The working harbour, ringed with seafood stores selling freshly caught cockles, whelks and, of course, oysters, is always worth a visit too.

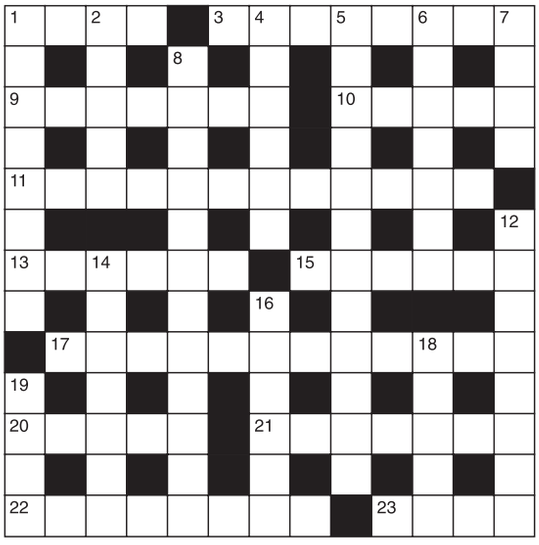
It may not be on such a grand scale as before - but the Whitstable Oyster Festival remains one of the stand-out events and one which will continue to pull in the crowds.

■ **For full details see the site whitstableoysterfestival.co.uk.**

ACTIVITIES: There's plenty to do for visitors of all ages during the event

PUZZLES

DOUBLE CROSSWORD



Quick

Across
1. Divide (4)
3. Surrender (4,4)
9. Misdemeanour (7)
10. Dawn (3-2)
11. Absurd (12)
13. Advent (6)
15. Missing (6)
17. Miraculous (12)
20. Heading (5)
21. Decked (7)
22. Ponder (8)
23. Exceedingly (4)

Down
1. Outlook (8)
2. Plunder (5)
4. Avoids (6)
5. Allotment (12)
6. Speculation (7)
7. Mature (4)
8. Proclamation (12)
12. Impassively (8)
14. On horseback (7)
16. Unharmed (6)
18. Extent (5)
19. Stalk (4)

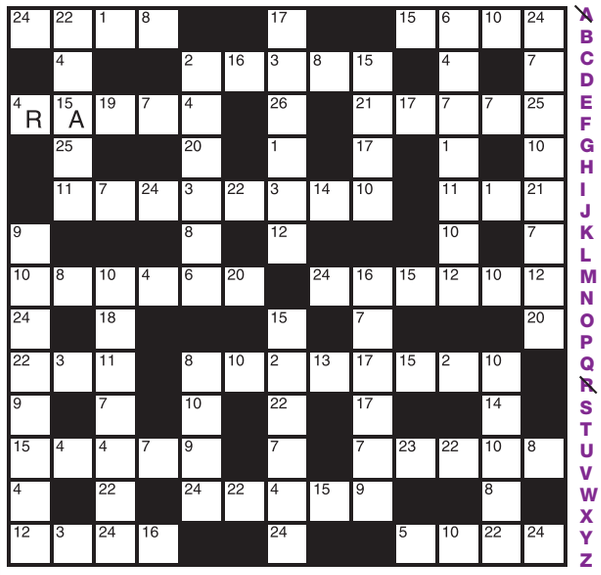
Cryptic

Across
1. Fish having escaped, we hear (4)
3. Rice soup could become highly esteemed (8)
9. Late meals for drinkers (7)
10. These will ruin the page (5)
11. Accommodation for the ranker? (7,5)
13. He can be seen at the ringside for a short time (6)
15. Watch chain for Einstein, for instance (6)
17. Well, that's what he's expected to find (5,7)
20. Prevent endless travel in confusion (5)
21. Can be stretched in steel, maybe (7)
22. Borderline obliged to be put near a railway (8)
23. Cleric emerges from inside a nunnery! (4)

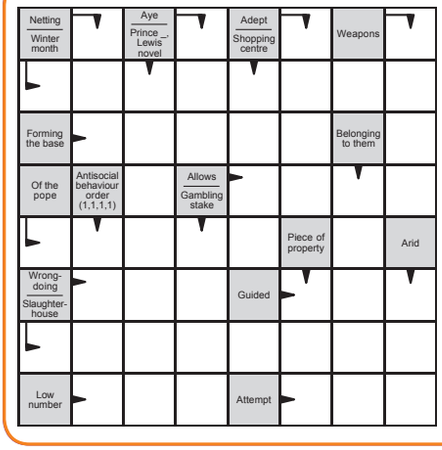
Down
1. The final appointment indicating it's time for retiring! (4,4)
2. It's a sign this island is linked with corn (5)
4. Kind of apple having fungus disease round the south-east (6)
5. The upkeep of the benefice that rises with inflation (4,2,6)
6. Superintend putting a piece of poetry in Old English (7)
7. Sounds as though it enables one to observe a particular spot (4)
8. Don't stand for this clue! (6,6)
12. One who operates round the head of the Thames for fish (8)
14. A fine building providing conversation over the water in France! (7)
16. On paper he has a responsible job (6)
18. Unsophisticated one in important part of the Church (5)
19. Sounds like a tight squeeze at the side of the door (4)

CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter.
For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.



Arrowword

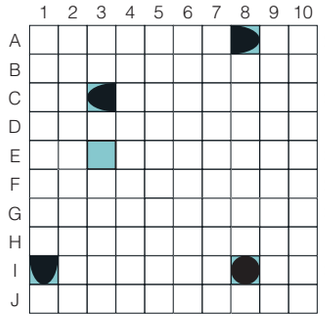


Enter your answers in the direction indicated by the arrows.

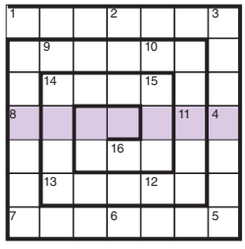
Battleships

Find where ships shown below are hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some of the squares have been filled to start you off.

THE FLEET
1 x Battleship
2 x Cruiser
3 x Destroyer
4 x Submarine



Word Spiral



Starting from 1, fill in the grid clockwise with four-letter words. The last letter of each word becomes the first letter of the next to reveal the key word in the shaded boxes.

1. Sicilian volcano
2. Region
3. Atmosphere
4. First man
5. Intend
6. Title
7. Dutch cheese
8. Masculine
9. Reverberation
10. Cooker
11. Shipshape
12. Melt
13. Teak, say
14. Expensive
15. Hasty
16. Search for prey

Keyword clue: An American state

SUDOKU

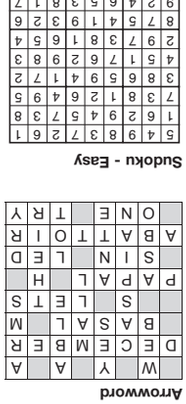
Hard

					3		7	
		2		6			1	
9						6		
7	4		6	3			2	
		6				3		
	8			2	1		6	9
		7						8
	3			7		5		
	1		5					

Easy

		9	8		7			1
	6	2		4			3	
7	3			2		4		5
	8		5					
4		1		6	2	9		3
					1		5	
	7		4	1			2	6
	2	4		5		8		
6				7	8	5		

Solutions



Arrowword

Down: 1 Prospect; 2 Rifle; 4 Averts; 5 Distribution; 6 Venture; 7 Ripe; 8 Announcement; 12 Stolidly; 14 Mounted; 16 Intact; 18 Range; 19 Stem.

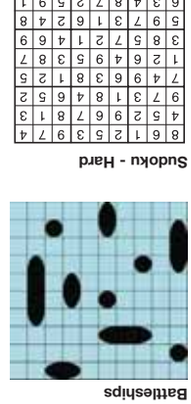
Codeword

1=U, 2=C, 3=I, 4=R, 5=J, 6=G, 7=O, 8=N, 9=W, 10=E, 11=P, 12=D, 13=K, 14=V, 15=A, 16=H, 17=L, 18=X, 19=Z, 20=Y, 21=B, 22=T, 23=F, 24=S, 25=M, 26=Q

Word Spiral

1 Etna; 2 Area; 3 Aura; 4 Adam; 5 Mean; 6 Name; 7 Edam; 8 Male; 9 Echo; 10 Oven; 11 Neat; 12 Thaw; 13 Wood; 14 Dear; 15 Rash; 16 Hunt.

Keyword: Montana



Battleships

Double Crossword

Cryptic

Across: 1 Lucé; 3 Precious; 9 Suppers; 10 Sheet; 11 Private house; 13 Second; 15 Albert; 17 Water diviner; 20 Avert; 21 Tensile; 22 Boundary; 23 Dean. Down: 1 Last post; 2 Capri; 4 Russet; 5 Cost of living; 6 Oversee; 7 Site; 8 Remain seated; 12 Surgeon; 14 Chateau; 16 Editor; 18 Naive; 19 Jamb.

Quick

Across: 1 Part; 3 Hand over; 9 Offence; 10 Sun-up; 11 Preposterous; 13 Coming; 15 Absent; 17 Supernatural; 20 Title; 21 Adorned; 22 Meditate; 23 Very.

Down: 1 Finale; 2 Aversion; 4 Name; 5 Mean; 6 Male; 7 Neat; 8 Oven; 9 Echo; 10 Wood; 11 Rash; 12 Hunt; 14 Dear; 15 Thaw; 16 Author; 18 Montana

Sudoku - Easy

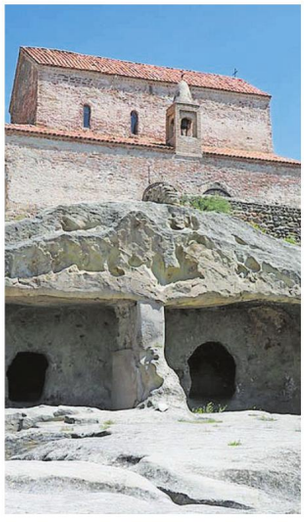
5	4	9	8	3	7	2	6	1
1	6	2	9	4	5	7	3	8
7	3	8	1	2	6	4	9	5
3	8	6	5	9	4	1	7	2
4	5	1	7	6	2	9	8	3
2	9	7	3	8	1	6	5	4
8	7	5	4	1	9	3	2	6
9	2	4	6	5	3	8	1	7
6	1	3	2	7	8	5	4	9

Sudoku - Hard

8	6	1	2	5	3	9	7	4
4	5	2	9	6	7	8	1	3
9	7	3	1	8	4	6	5	2
7	4	9	6	3	8	1	2	5
1	2	6	4	9	5	3	8	7
3	8	5	7	2	1	4	6	9
5	9	7	3	1	6	2	4	8
6	3	4	8	7	2	5	9	1
2	1	8	5	4	9	7	3	6

Got Georgia on your mind?

Not that Georgia. But here's why you should go to this one, says **Mike Pickup**



"I'm off to Georgia" I told the neighbours, the country that is, not the American state of the same name.

I travelled via Astana, capital of Kazakhstan. I was there last year so was delighted to re-visit the world's weirdest, and newest, capital city with its straight grid-like roads. In contrast Tbilisi, Georgia's capital, is so very different – old buildings and roads with bends in them.

Although tired from travelling I was taken to dinner at Tsiskvili. This is not just a restaurant but an entire Georgian experience – a feast with great entertainment. Guests sat down at a table laden with food, not sure how we were going to cope, but this was just starters! Musicians and dancers entertained us while we ate in a lovely riverside setting.

Next morning I set off for the cave town of Uflistsikhe, one of the earliest settlements in Georgia. At its peak it was home to an estimated 20,000 people.

Then it was on to Gori, the birthplace of Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union from 1941 to 1953. I saw the small wooden house in which Stalin was born in 1878 and his personal armour plated Pullman railway carriage.

Later I visited Mtskheta for a lunchtime feast. Dating back to the fifth century BC, it was the capital of Georgia for eight hundred years. The small bustling town is popular with visitors and dominated by the fortified Svetitskoveli cathedral. Legend has it that Jesus's robe is buried here.

So, back to explore Tbilisi. It sits astride the Mtkvari River and is almost completely surrounded by mountains. Perhaps the most spectacular of the river crossings is the Peace Bridge covered in a bow-shaped steel and glass structure. Another river crossing worth seeing is the Baratashvili Bridge which contains a number of bronze statues of people looking along the river, sitting on the edge of the bridge and more.

Overlooking the river is a rocky outcrop, one of the earliest inhabited areas of the city. King Vakhtang Gorgasali erected a palace and church here in the fifth century and there is a statue of him mounted on a horse next to the Metekhi Church.

Tbilisi has a famous funicular railway which took me to Mtatsminda, 700 meters above sea level. That evening I had another feast on a terrace overlooking the city.

It was time to go home; I was beginning to wonder if my clothes would ever fit me again.

Factfile

How to get there

- Air Astana offers return flights between Heathrow and Astana from £495 and return flights between Astana and Tbilisi from £215. From 11 September Air Astana offers a stop-over in Astana with transfers and hotel on a B&B basis for just $1 for the first night. Additional nights at standard rates. Go to www.airastana.com/uk/en-US Tel: 020 7644 6121 Mon-Fri, 0900–1730.
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feedback

TDC should be open on Manston

THE hundreds of people queuing to get into RSP (RiverOak) presentations about Manston Airport recently didn't escape my notice.

Nor did the fact that very few councillors attended any of the meetings.

Having made a few enquiries I have discovered, to my dismay, that although Dover District Council (who also run a cabinet system) and Kent County Council, have arranged to have a presentation to full council, as yet, Thanet District Council haven't. Why not?

Instead, they are planning to have a closed (secret) meeting on July 18, of just the cabinet and senior management team. No other councillors, nor the public, are allowed to attend.

Why not?

As representatives of all the people of Thanet, where the airport lies, is it not the responsibility of our own councillors to know what RiverOak's latest plans are for Manston Airport, as well as those of Stone Hill Park?

Regardless of our views about the airport reopening, the development consent order (DCO) is clearly rumbling on, following advice from the Planning Inspectorate advice department in Bristol and is on the official government website for all to see at infrastructure.gov.uk/manstonairport.

As are RSP's huge and legal documents at RSP.co.uk.

To be fully informed, open and transparent as promised by Ulip about the future of the airport, we need to write or email our TDC ward councillors and/or Chris Wells and insist on a public presentation to full council in the very near future.

Angela Stevens,
Ramsgate

Airport is never going to take off

SIMON Crow should lose no sleep over night flights from Manston Airport [KoS, letters, 02.07] - they're never going to happen, nor will there be any daytime flights either.

The project [to reopen Manston Airport] is a turkey and turkeys can't fly.

John Ward Moorhouse,
Tunbridge Wells

Letter writers are missing the point

OH how my alt fan-club really do not like having their cosy complacency upset by the realities [KoS, letters, last week].

Mr Granger though does have a point in that it has been the right wing versions of the Tories and Labour which have brought us to our current parlous state for the many but I wonder what if Mr Brown hadn't bailed out the banks with Tories backing?

None of this though was Mr Corbyn's fault.

However, to clarify my actual position; I only back Mr Corbyn's Labour in as far as they are the ones in pole position to take over and indeed the latest polls suggest that he'd win a majority were an election to happen quite soon.

Then we'd see whether shadow chancellor John McDonnell's figures add up or need revising in the light of circumstances.

That said, at least Labour produced costings in their manifesto whereas the Tories just published a completely uncosted mish-mash and even now I'd strongly advise all never to believe a word they say on their triple-lock pensions or social care proposals back tracking.

My main vote primarily goes to the Green Party though; which I'd like to see in power via a PR vote as by far the largest party albeit in coalition with Corbyn's Labour.

The Lib Dems and SNP would be the main opposition and the Tories finally reduced permanently to a single figure handful for what they and their corporate and media mates have helped do.

Elsewhere, the usual dodging of the obvious mammoths, never mind elephants, in the room by Messrs Carr and Baker.

Mr Carr points to the unions funding Labour but avoids the far greater bungs to the Tories from their business pals; whilst getting paranoid about Mr Putin lobbing nuke missiles at us, though for why escapes him, and ignores that the greater threat may lie with the incompetent in the White House across 'the pond'.

Besides, Trident subs will be white elephants anyway, as drone technology renders them redundant.

What's needed is for the military to be enabled to take on civilian contracts and then put any surpluses into helping fund increasing the far better tech-smart and nimble conventional forces that will likely feature in the future.

He also swipes at the benighted students, who suffer under the highest loans in Europe and face rising interest rates on those, whilst now even the architect of such, Andrew Adonis, calls for the abolition of such.

Mr Baker forgets that government funding is nothing like household budgets and that, whilst the UK has a £1.7 trillion national debt put there mostly by former chancellor George Osborne, the rich in the UK now have around £11.1tn, in albeit various assets between them, and tax havens still hold probably over £30tn between them.

Both cannot of course mention the sudden 'magic-money tree' of £1bn to the DUP to prop up Mrs May, whilst our public services remain underfunded, foodbank use increases, pay and benefits caps remain, gig economy jobs proliferate and people languish in over 181 buildings with cladding similar to that used on Grenfell Tower.

So whilst I return again to the wings I'll not be asleep but keeping a close eye with my 'scalpel pen of reality', as it were, at the ready.

Ray Duff,
Folkestone

Ray, you'd leave us up the duff

RAY Duff's latest tirade was outrageous even by his standards [KoS, letters, 02.02].

If we were to get what he suggests this country really would be 'up the Duff' and most certainly without a paddle.

S Reeves,
Herne Bay

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Lorry park would be a waste of public cash

I AM writing with regard the situation of the proposed lorry park in Stanford.

I feel this is a huge waste of public funds given that we have not had an Operation Stack situation since July 2015.

The proposed lorry park is also far too large and much too close to the Port of Dover and the Eurotunnel terminal.

Building on a floodplan area is also a major issue. It has since been proposed that 12,000 new houses are to be built in the surrounding areas of Sellindge and Lympne, at the old Folkestone Racecourse site, which are in the same vicinity as the proposed lorry park.

A new junction on the M20 - 10a - has also been confirmed which is down to house an enormous industrial area with buildings to the equivalent of up to 30 football pitches, not only this, but there is current work in Ashford building 5,700 new homes with a figure of 30,000-plus planned for the town.

My concern is, that with all these proposed 'improvements' to Ashford and its surrounding areas, is that both Canterbury and Ashford will suffer severely from flooding due to the River Stour flowing through them.

The water from both Stanford and Sellindge runs to the reservoir in Aldington which is not equipped to handle any kind of water surge now, so will certainly not cope with this additional pressure. All the other proposals mentioned above, however, are situated below the reservoir, thus travelling straight through to Ashford and along to Canterbury.

I would suggest building an entirely new road which LGV drivers would be diverted to when Stack is put in force. This road would filter off inbetween junctions eight and nine of the M20 running parallel with the motorway and would give access to the A20 and continue through to Ashford.

Brian Marchant
Ashford

your say...

Send us your views.
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3) Be written in clear, concise English.
4) Not be overly sensational.
5) Have a sense of humour.
6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
8) Highlight topical issues of concern to people living in the county.
9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.
10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.

images of kent

Prince of Wales Terrace, Deal

by **Brian Summers from Faversham**

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driving

COMPACT: Škoda's Rapid and Rapid Spaceback affordable family hatchbacks have been refreshed and upgraded

Refreshed and upgraded Rapid launched by Skoda

SKODA is being kept busy launching new models and revising existing ranges as part of its strong product offensive.

Having launched the all-new Kodiaq large sport utility vehicle, it has revised the family Octavia and large Superb hatches and estates, Citigo city car and Rapid and Rapid Spaceback hatchbacks, and launches its new compact Karoq SUV at the end of the year.

Here we look at the compact, but spacious, Rapid and Rapid Spaceback - affordable family cars that sit between the Fabia supermini and Octavia.

Both are five-door hatches, the Rapid looks like a saloon while the Rapid Spaceback has a smaller boot – 415 against 550 litres - but more spacious back seats and a smart deep glass tailgate.

As well as a facelift - new foglights, front bumper and wheel - brighter bi-xenon headlights, daytime running lights using LED technology and automatic headlights with high-beam assistant to automatically dip them are available.

It has also been upgraded inside, with new door inlays and redesigned air vents, instruments and air-con controls.

There are also new engines with 95 and 110PS three-cylinder 1.0-litre turbo petrols, replacing the 10kg heavier 1.2-litre TSI units, joining the 90PS 1.4-litre and 115PS 1.6-litre turbo diesels.

In the Spaceback the lower-powered petrol and diesel engines are also offered with automatic transmission while the Rapid's auto petrol offering is a 125PS 1.4-litre TSI.

The 95PS 1.0 TSI Rapid has a 0-62mph time of 11 seconds, a top speed of 116 mph, 64.2mpg combined and 101g/km of CO2. The figures for the 110PS version are 9.8 seconds, 124mph, 62.8mpg and 104g/km.

The Rapid, available as S, SE, Sport and SEL, is priced £15,345 to £20,135, with the Rapid Spaceback S, SE Tech and SE Sport £14,410 to £19,570.

KENT LIFE

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Fresh chapter in Hyundai success story

Hyundai calls its i30 the DNA car and this third-generation family hatchback, and forthcoming estate, takes the brand to the next level, says Andy Russell

PEOPLE frequently ask what I think about certain models or recommend they look at and it's a chance to open their eyes to marques they would probably not have considered.

Most want something sensible, reliable, that will take the family comfortably, has some nice kit and gives peace-of-mind motoring without busting the budget to acquire or run.

It's hard not to steer them towards brands like Hyundai which, with a range from city cars to big 4x4s, meets many demands.

It's a line-up constantly evolving, so youthful, and the latest relaunch is the i30 hatch, followed now by Tourer estate.

Hyundai has built its success in Europe with the i30 – its 'DNA car' for the family - and this third-generation model takes the look to a new level, launching the new face's 'cascading grille'.

They used to sell purely on price, now design is key for customers so the new model is one of the most stylish compact family hatchs.

Hyundai has also taken on board customer needs with the latest connectivity technology and naturally-aspirated petrol engines make way for more efficient turbo units.

A new chassis, more direct steering and a highly-rigid body are key ingredients for the improved driving manners.

Most owners want a car that's comfortable and corners confidently, rather than a sharp, sporty steer, so this i30 ticks the boxes.

The supple ride does a decent job of ironing out rough roads, the biggest niggle being tyre noise.

No issues with the handling either, tackling twists and turn competently with good grip and body control. The tweaked steering makes light work of getting in and out of parking spaces but is well weighted at speed.

The i30 is roomy, light and airy inside with decent headroom and good rear legroom, even with adults up front. A small transmission hump in the floor shouldn't trouble a middle passenger in the back, while the 395-litre boot is bigger than most rivals and well shaped.

This third-generation i30 heralds the next chapter in the brand's success story and it's hard not to make a case for, or come away liking, this attractive all-round package.

Hyundai i30

Price: **from £16,995**

Engine tested: **1,353cc, 140PS, four-cylinder turbo petrol**

Performance: **0-62mph 8.9 seconds; top speed 130mph**

MPG: **Urban 42.8; extra urban 58.9; combined 52.3**

CO2 emissions: **124g/km**

Warranty: **Five year, unlimited mileage**

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- Ability to recognise and report situations affecting patient care
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Bell-Drummond commits future

The batsman has represented Kent since the age of seven

Cricket

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

KENT can expect "much more to come" from opener, Daniel Bell-Drummond, after he pledged his future to the club this week by signing a contract extension.

The England Lions batsman, who turns 24 next month, is a graduate of the prolific Kent Cricket Academy and has represented the county since the age of seven.

He made his first class debut at just 17 and has become a regular at the top of the order in all formats, earning his county cap in 2015.

2016 was a breakthrough year with Bell-Drummond improving his career-best in all three formats and earning Kent's One-Day Player of the Year award.

The Lewisham-born right-hander said: "Kent has been a huge part of my life since I was seven years old. I feel very much at home here.

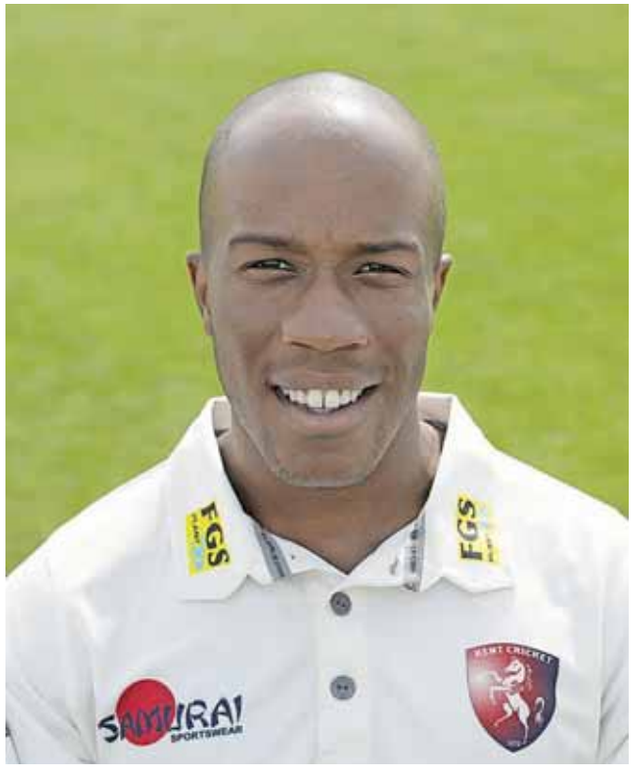
"I want to play for England one day and I feel my game is progressing well with the support of Matt Walker and the Kent coaches.

"It's an exciting time for the club and I want to contribute to some success for our supporters."

Kent head coach Matt Walker said: "Daniel has worked very hard on all aspects of his game and it's pleasing to see the progress he's made in recent years.

"The most exciting thing about Daniel is how much more there is to come and it's great to see him commit his future to the club.

"He's shown maturity beyond his years since breaking into the side at the top of the order where there's no hiding place."



LOYAL: Daniel Bell-Drummond

Pictures: ADY KERRY

The Spitfires won their opening T20 Blast match last weekend, with Bell-Drummond hitting 90 himself against the Essex Eagles, but slumped to defeat in the week at Gloucestershire.

Kent's Imran Qayyum said; "I suppose it's a case of mixed feelings for me. It was great to get my debut after being on the staff for four years, but I am disappointed that we lost.

"Fair play to Gloucestershire, they got it right on the day and all credit to them.

"We just need to bounce back straight away if we can."

County stars picked for world championships

Athletics

KENT athletes Adam Gemili, Dina Asher-Smith, Jack Green and Tom Bosworth have all been named in the squad for next month's world championships in London.

The IAAF event, held in Stratford from August 4-13, will see the world's finest athletes descend on the capital, five years after it hosted the Olympic Games.

Dartford sprinter Gemili was a doubt for the championships earlier this month and misses out in the 200m, but has been selected for the 4x100m relay, while Maidstone's Green will compete in the 4x400m and 400m hurdles.

Orpington-born Asher-Smith, who won Olympic bronze in the 4x100m relay in 2016 and finished 5th in the 2015 200m world championships final, returned to action earlier this month after suffering fractured a bone in her right foot in February.

POTENTIAL: Adam Gemili

She'll represent Great Britain in both disciplines, while Sevenoaks race walker Tom Bosworth will also be out to impress, after clinching an incredible world record last weekend.

Performance director for British Athletics, Neil Black said: "This feels bigger for us than Rio.

"London 2017 is the major global sporting event this year and will be the biggest occasion the country has seen since 2012.

"We've selected some incredibly talented athletes, and in many events there have been some close calls.

"It's now up to them to grasp this opportunity and produce performances that will make the whole nation proud."

Sport Shorts

» Email the sports desk
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

Loftus-Cheek in loan move to Crystal Palace

KENT'S Ruben Loftus-Cheek has joined Crystal Palace on a season-long loan deal from Chelsea.

The midfielder, who grew up in Swanley, becomes new Eagles manager Frank de Boer's first signing at Selhurst Park after completing the move on Wednesday.

"I had the option of coming to Palace and I thought that it would be great for me," Loftus-Cheek told Palace's official site.

"I live not too far away, I was born in Lewisham and Palace is a good club so I thought it's a good chance to play here and be a part of the team."

The 21-year-old came through the Chelsea Academy and made his senior first-team debut in the Champions League tie against Sporting Lisbon during December 2014.

Loftus-Cheek was played in a more advanced role under Antonio Conte last season, when he made 11 appearances for the Premier League champions as well as in the EFL Cup and FA Cup.

PROSPECT: Loftus-Cheek

BOSS: Dover manager Chris Kinnear

Dover snap up former Tottenham prospect

DOVER Athletic have snapped up a one-time Tottenham Hotspur prospect with the signing of Giancarlo Gallifuoco.

The 23-year-old Australian, who played the second half of Tuesday's 3-0 win at Deal Town, has signed a one-year-deal.

Gallifuoco first came to England to join Spurs when he was 18 in 2012 and he spent two years with them before leaving for Swansea City.

Able to play in central defence, central midfield and at right-back, he will wear the number four shirt at Crabble and becomes the club's ninth signing of the window, following the additions of Ryan Bird, Femi Ilesanmi, Tobi Sho-Silva, Connor Essam, Manny Parry, Kane Richards, Mitch Brundle and Jamie Allen earlier this summer.

McMahon hails Coulson signing

EBBSFLEET United have completed their latest signing with the capture of versatile 23-year-old Luke Coulson.

While favouring a wide midfield position, Coulson is equally at home at full-back and in central berths and joins from Barnet, where he played 15 times in League Two last season.

Fleet boss Daryl McMahon told the club's website: "Luke has good experience, he's a player that will be familiar to Ebbsfleet fans.

"We all know what he was like at Oxford City, he terrorised us a couple of times.

"He went from Oxford to Eastleigh and did really well for them. He was talked of about getting a move to the Championship at the time.

"It didn't quite come through for him and it hasn't really worked out at Barnet but he's coming in here at 23 and we've got another one at a good young age with so much potential to do very well for us."

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